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*The title Claudia originally given to this book was changed by the author, after the book was ready for publication, to Claudia Hyde, to avoid confusion with Claudia, a novel by Miss Amanda M. Douglas.*

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AUTHOR OF "ON BOTH SIDES," ETC.

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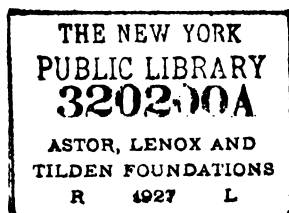
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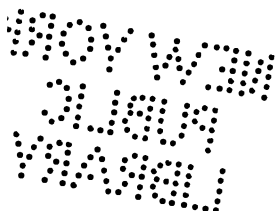
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# CLAUDIA.

## CHAPTER I.

"Thus Fate knocks at the door." — *Beethoven.*

"To intending emigrants, gentlemen, farmers (younger sons more especially). An unusual opportunity is presented by the advertiser, Mr. E. P. Butterworth. Positions offered to a limited number. No premium. To learn farming in Virginia. Climate healthful. Farm of a thousand acres. Assured future for men of the right sort. Home comforts. Excellent sport. Promoted to manage separate estates if found capable. Within easy reach of five cities. References required, and guarantee. Address, 'Advertiser,' for a fortnight, Adelphi, Liverpool, and after that, at Wyvvern, Queen's County, Virginia."

This advertisement appeared in the London "Times," month November, date 27th, year — well, let us say in the eighteen-eighties. It was read by a gentleman in lodgings in Sloane Street, very thoughtfully, several times, and, when digested, acted on by Mr. Mildmay, who jumped up, seized an A. B. C. guide to the railway system of Great Britain, and rang his bell. His valet, Giddings (a servant of the calm, inscrutable, peerless sort, peculiar to the country), appeared before it had ceased to tinkle, as if he had been awaiting the summons just outside the door, as he probably had. Mr. Mildmay, absorbed in his Chinese puzzle of a guide, did not heed him.

The ordinary domestic would have reminded him of the fact by saying, "Did you ring, sir?" Giddings would have stood there silent for the remainder of the day, most likely, first; certainly until he either received an order, or permission to retire. The grenadiers of Frederick "the little-great" were not greater martinets and disciplinarians in their way than Giddings in his. It was his religion to be a gentleman's gentleman, and if "the *genre* was not great," he at least was great in it; no man ever had a better servant, and few are they in this world, and none in this country, who have ever known what it is to have one as good.

"Fetch me a cab, at once, Giddings, please," said Mr. Mildmay at last; and being the domestic-extraordinary, he did not stop to ask whether he should call "a four-wheeler."

"At once" meant a hansom, and he instantly vanished down stairs, where he sent the little slavey of the house out on his errand. He no more thought of going himself than the Duke of Cambridge would of putting on his own pipe-clay for a review. But in a few minutes he went up and announced to Mr. Mildmay that his hansom was waiting, and, being told that his master wished to catch the Liverpool express, in a twinkling had put a dressing-bag containing everything that a gentleman could need under the circumstances (but nothing superfluous) into ~~that~~ hansom, together with rugs, a foot-warmer, the "~~times~~," and a French novel. He had likewise strapped his master's canes and umbrella together, filled his cigar-case and flask, and done a dozen more things looking to the same end, Mr. Mildmay's comfort; and when that gentleman came down, he was awaiting him, holding back respectfully the doors of the hansom, which as usual would not stay open. He cast down his eyes respectfully when Mr. Mildmay bounded into his seat, and did not ask if

"anything more was needed," or if there were "any orders." With Giddings to serve was to divine, to stand, to wait, to obey.

"Take away this thing!" said Mr. Mildmay, spurning the foot-warmer; and Giddings took it away. Mr. Mildmay had forgotten his watch in his haste.

"Excuse me mentioning it, sir, but this was overlooked, I presume," said Giddings, producing it, dangling by its chain. It was a gift of Giddings to produce anything that was wanted, in the very nick of time. If his master had been on an Arctic expedition, and been threatened with scurvy, Giddings would have oozed fresh vegetables and fruit from every pocket and package he possessed, at a moment's notice.

Mr. Mildmay smiled and thanked him. His smile was extremely frank and cordial, and it dissipated the mild, surprised hauteur that had overspread Giddings's face when he had kicked away the foot-warmer. A most luxurious master he had been hitherto, and his man did not understand this manifestation of a new resolution not to "coddle" himself.

"Dinner at eight to-morrow night. Euston Station," said Mr. Mildmay.

Giddings stepped back with a "Yes, sir" to him, and a repetition of his order to cabby, and, after a slippery, scrambling plunge of a start on the wet cobble-stones, the large-boned horse dashed off at a most creditable pace, the hansom put up its heels as it were, and tilted Mr. Mildmay back against the cushions; and although he did not know it, he was off for America from that moment.

Giddings looked after him for a moment musingly:—

"Wherever is 'e gone now? Something's hup! That's the first smile I've seen on his face this three months. Poor fellow! And 'im so good-tempered, and always full of his larks and jokes, when he was

a youngster at 'The Towers.' And no wonder. It's 'ard lines for him, 'ard lines! 'E's been that irritable as never was, lately, and has took no manner of notice of my sacrifices for 'im. A place waitin' and beggin' for me ever since the season began—hown man to Lord Toppleton, most of the year in town, and a good bit of travelin', without *globe-trottin'* in Africa, and the Heast, and Rooshia; countries with 'orrid flies and fleas, and nothing to be 'ad 'ot and comfortable when they are cold, and a sun that regularly cooks your brains, and sends you 'ome wet to the skin every time you go out when they're 'ot. And Toppleton says wages 'igher than usual, and perquizzites igstraordinary—*most* satisfactory all round. But I never was one to do things on the 'op. And I know what's due the fambly. And Mr. Gerald 'as always been the gentleman, I must say. I would n't have stopped on with 'is Roil 'Ighness the Prince if 'e 'ad n't! I can't abide a cad! I'll horder a Nesselrode puddin' for to-morrow, he likes it of all things; and we are not long together now. It's little enough he's eaten here lately, 'e's been that cut up by all that's 'appened. 'E walked the floor for a week. I 'eard him groaning one night. And the minute I leave the room, 'e sighs and sighs, and just sits in his chair and does nothin'; and 'im a regular steam-engine, and a big man in the Halpine Club. And no wonder. It's a *hawful* change for 'im, and no mistake." Here he walked indoors, and roundly snubbed the lodging-house keeper, who wished to know where his master had gone.

"Hit's not for me to know, or knowin' to say. You must know *that*, if you know anything about a gentleman's gentleman," he said to her reprovingly. And then he sent the little slavey, Eliza, out for the "Times," that he might try to find out something. *And then he ordered dinner and all his favorite dishes for "two gentlemen."*

When Eliza brought the "Times" he bullied her for not airing it before bringing it up, being naturally squeamish as to the service rendered him. He then scanned it curiously. "That will be it!" he thought when he came to the advertisement quoted, picking it out by instinct. "The Colonies! Great 'Eavens! It never can be the *Colonies*! Who'd 'ave thought he'd ever come to *that* w'en 'is uncle was dotin' on him so, as a little chap, and never could do nothin' without 'im — keepin' the poor child up, all hours at night, even, and 'im droppin' with sleep, just to see 'im play w'ist. The *Colonies*! There ain't 'orses enough in England to drag *me* out to none of 'em! Elephants and camel-leopards could n't do it! Poor Mr. Gerald!" Here he rang the bell briskly, and when Eliza appeared bade her tell her mistress that a mistake in the "dinner horders would not be overlooked, in particular the pudding for to-morrow;" and when Eliza had curtsied and said "Thank you," as poor Eliza would have done if Giddings had given her a black eye instead of a message, he fell into a train of reflection very creditable to him as a man and valet. The only thought that had any comfort in it in this last connection was that he had "stuck by" his master in his misfortunes. "Pore Mr. Gerald! The title, and the property, and his sweetheart, and now the *Colonies*!" This piling of Ossa on Pelion so impressed Giddings's mind, accustomed always to think of his master as the inheritor of all the glories and possessions of the family in which he had been born, and in which his father, and grandfather and great-grandfather before him, had been faithful, respectable, and respected servants, that his naturally melancholy and dignified expression was much enhanced, and his whole person and manner made the most striking contrast to that of his friend "Toppleton," when that *functionary* was announced by Eliza, a little later in the evening.



His feeling was that "Toppleton" was "vulgar for the place," when he came in, he was so large and fresh-colored and prosperous; and his friend received quite another impression. "'Ang it! What a hair the fellow's got!" he thought admiringly, and, as he advanced, said, "No bad news, I 'ope, Mildmay? You look very down in the mouth."

But not even with this encouragement was Giddings to be betrayed into the impropriety of discussing his master or his master's affairs. He had his own ideas of honor, and was accounted "close" and "an oyster" in the servants' hall in consequence. When "Toppleton" insisted during dinner on turning the conversation into that channel, Giddings got into his shell, admitted little, extenuated much, praised more. He belonged to that species of faithful, attached domestic quite extinct in France, and very nearly so in England and the Southern States of America — the *servante de tendresse*. As a part, and no unimportant part of the Mildmay family in his own opinion (and theirs), he valued its honor, and kept its counsel. Obligated to give an opinion and discuss its affairs, he as usual became reserved. Pressed by the present incumbent of the place of the future, he would only allow that what had occurred was "unfortunate." Sir George had a right to marry at seventy, "though not often done by the fambly." He had a son and heir, and it was a fine thing that the succession should be in the direct line "for the fambly." He had bred up his nephew as heir-presumptive, "with the full knowledge and consent of the fambly." He would doubtless "provide 'andsome" for his nephew; "there had never been any paupers in the fambly." Lady Muriel had not broken off her marriage with his master at the last moment because of his changed fortunes at all, but because of "differences betwixt and between the pair — and her temper such that she would

have been no credit to the family." If he (Giddings) was leaving his master, it was not because his was a sinking ship, but from quite other motives and for quite other reasons. It was "a temporary thing before returning to the family." Had he not come with him into lodgings, when he gave up his rooms in St. James's "for this 'ole?" Eliza, with very red hands and open mouth, clutching her tray to her breast, quite resented this speech, though she respected him for making it.

"Toppleton," not in the least hoodwinked, and generously inflamed with Mildmay Moselle, brought down his fist finally with a terrific thump that sent Eliza scurrying into the pantry like a mouse behind the wainscoting, and declared that for his part he considered it a shame all around! Sir George was an old fool. His wife, he had heard "his fellow" say, was a pretty scullion. Lady Muriel was the worst of the lot in his opinion. He had it from her maid that the wedding-gown was in the house, and all the presents, and everything settled. It was hitting a fellow when he was down. "Mildmay need n't try to cram *him*." And now her engagement announced to Mr. Nokes, the rich Australian brewer, with only one eye! Altogether it was not until Eliza returned with coffee, and cigars began to fume instead, that "Toppleton" could be quieted. And though the two "gentlemen" sat late at table — and very like other gentlemen dining at the same hour all over London did they look, being both handsome men in full canonicals, their deficiencies betrayed only to the hearing ear — they could come to no agreement on another matter. Giddings would not say when he would be ready to succeed his friend, who was anxious to get out of service. "My master has not acquainted me with his intentions," he said; "I shall stop on until dismissed."

"Why don't you give notice?" asked "Toppleton;" "I never waits to be dismissed. I see myself!"

"And I 'ave n't lived with Tom, Dick, and 'Arry hon and off like a pieman. We don't give notice in the fambly we've always lived in, boy and man, in livery and out of livery. We consider it *low*, Toppleton, for an upper 'ousemaid and a stranger in the country *under two years*. I ain't such a beast as that. I ain't got the 'eart to do it, man, and if you carn't stop on, 'is Lordship 'll 'ave to get some other man, for come I can't and shan't until I am sent away," said Giddings with dignity.

"Well, well, do as you please, only you've got no call to be so 'igh and 'aughty about it as I can see. Good-night!" rejoined his easy and breezy companion, and so the evening ended.

Meanwhile, Gerald Mildmay had gone scudding down to Liverpool as fast as the express could take him. In his impatient and restless frame of mind, it seemed a slow and tiresome journey enough. The only other occupants of the carriage for more than half the distance were a typical British matron with a flock of children. Ordinarily he liked women and was fond of children, and he had been for some years attached to the English Embassies at Vienna and Rome, so that his little courtesies, when he came into casual contact with people, were as freely and gracefully dispensed as his small coins, as a rule, and with as little effort or distinct thought of being polite, much less benevolent. But this time he sat severely silent and grave in his corner, leaving the billowy lady opposite entirely to her own devices as to draughts and seats, declining also to make acquaintance with the Lilliputians who would have liked to know him better, and would have done so with the least encouragement, for they were not repelled by his gravity. They saw the kindness beneath, and they saw something else.

"Have you got the toothache?" one of the little

girls asked very seriously, after a prolonged study of his whole person, such as children give when they have their divining-rods in hand.

Gerald flushed, and shook his head and answered "No" curtly, and the child was promptly silenced by her mother, who thought he was annoyed. The child stared on, fascinated by his sad, handsome face. Her blue eyes reminded him of another pair disagreeably, or at least in a way to produce a very painful train of thought, in which he became completely absorbed, and he frowned so darkly that the sweet, sensitive child-face and tender heart opposite reflected his mood almost as a mirror might have done, or a bit of sky. If he had looked half as miserable as he felt, his little neighbor might have sobbed outright from sheer sympathy with the interesting stranger.

When he reached Liverpool and the "Adelphi," he found to his chagrin and disgust that Mr. Butterworth had just sailed for America, taking with him three men.

Somehow the fact helped to make him more desirous than ever of trying the plan and joining the party. If he had found Mr. Butterworth there, he would as like as not have given up the project if any feature of it had displeased him. As it was, he felt as though he had "missed a good thing," as though his ill luck even in this were pursuing him. So it was in a dogged and combative spirit that he put on the gloves to have a round with Fate. He sat down and wrote Mr. Butterworth a letter from the hotel, telling him that he had been misled by an advertisement of long standing into coming there; making many inquiries, and agreeing practically to join him in Virginia, if his reply should prove satisfactory. He spoke to the manager of the hotel about that gentleman, and was favorably impressed with what he heard. The more he thought

of it, the better he liked the idea. To tell the truth, England had become unbearable to him, and he longed to get away from it, as far and as quickly as possible. But for this, he would certainly have taken certain precautions, made careful inquiries, and behaved with that prudence and common sense with which, like most of his countrymen, he was well endowed.

"It can't be worse than this," he thought, as he steamed back to London. "I shall go to the devil if I stop on here. I never could be idle when I was rich, and happy in my fool's paradise. And I certainly can't afford it or stand it, now that I am a jilted beggar, though there does n't seem an earthly thing worth doing as far as I can see. Still — *il faut vivre* — in this most delightful of all worlds. I suppose I might invest in a pair of pistols by way of getting out of the difficulty, and say, '*Je ne vois pas la nécessité.*' I thought of it for about five minutes the night Muriel sent me adrift; but it's a cowardly, contemptible act! I was n't quite mad enough for that, thank God! I'm not a Frenchman, to go blowing out my brains because a woman loves a rent-roll and title, and all that, and pretends to be fond of the man that represents it. Oh! what a fool I was; and what a consummate actress she was! But just not quite fool enough to kill myself for a cold-hearted, covetous Circassian I took for a sweet English girl! No, I may die, and worms may eat me, but not for love, such love as hers, at any rate.

"I suppose I ought to be glad the sale was not completed. I wonder why I am not? I am haunted by all her pretty ways, and looks, and speeches day and night. Were they all lies? Can it be her mother's influence?"

A great wave of tenderness came over his honest heart as he reflected that Lady Muriel's mother was an appallingly worldly and domineering woman. All the

old influence reasserted itself as this view of the case presented itself in one of the swift alternations of feeling peculiar to lovers. A proud man, he had taken his dismissal so quietly that his *fiancée* had been half-relieved, half-affronted; and though he had written to her afterwards, and had got but frigid replies, he now remembered that letters are notoriously the most misleading medium of communication between lovers that could possibly have been invented. Only a month ago all had been well between them.

"Yet, it is, it *must* be that old Lady Kew of a mother of hers," he eagerly concluded. "She would marry her off to Mephistopheles himself, if he were accounted a good '*parti*,' and declare that her sweet daughter's heart was quite won by his sad limp. If I could only see her — alone — without that grim old Gorgon sitting by, staring at us with all her Norman nose, of which she is so proud, and intimidating the girl!"

From this wish to the determination to gratify it, anybody can see that it would not be far; and in fact, at the very next halting-place, what should he do but get out, and catch a local train across country that brought him late that evening in the neighborhood of his faithless "fair." He took a fly at the station, and drove by lovers' post to "Kyrles's Abbey," arriving there, chilled to the bone, while it was still possible conventionally to make a call. But he was decidedly out of luck here, too; at least the world would not wag as he wished. The butler informed him that the family had gone abroad, and if he had dared would have looked the sympathy he felt. He knew all about the affair. What is there that our servants do not know, the meekest, the most unintelligent?

"Where had they gone?"

"To Paris."

"Would Mr. Mildmay come in?"

"No, Mr. Mildmay would not, nor would he be tempted by 'something 'ot' and the 'good fire in the library.'"

"It is the very day on which we were to have been married," thought Gerald, "and here I am going away from her door out into darkness and despair alone!" He felt that he could not bear further uncertainty about it. He resolved to follow them, and asked when they had left. Hearing that it was the day before, he turned away. The butler shouted for the flyman, who had driven away a bit and now drove back. In his pre-occupation Gerald forgot to ask the one thing it most behooved him to know — their address in Paris. But this the butler volunteered when tipped, and, after urging "a glass of sherry at least, sir," saw him drive away with much regret, and a most sincere sympathy with that open secret, his sorrow and chagrin.

Servants always liked Gerald. Not that he was especially considerate of them, being too self-indulgent for one thing, after the manner of most men of his class, and too self-absorbed for another. But he was habitually courteous and generous, which counted for much; constitutionally calm and just, which counted for more, and had the "*bel air*," that combination of advantages, the "hall-mark" of rank, birth, fortune, which counted most of all, stamping him as it did with that air of command which flunkeys interpret as a right to "lord" it over the whole yellow-plush tribe. He waived it gracefully now, as usual, and as usual his complaisance was gratefully recognized, appreciated. But it was Pigott, not Gerald, who thought to give the half-frozen flyman a rug to wrap about his feet.

By sheer force of will Gerald made connection with the tidal train for Dover, and just before he got there, who should get into his compartment but the Honor-

able Charles Barbury, Lady Muriel's cousin, and his intimate acquaintance!

"How do, old chap? What does this mean? You going abroad, too? Won't you be rather in the way? I saw your — what an idiot I am! I'm always putting my foot into it! I mean I saw Muriel yesterday. Any draft from that window?" said that gentleman as he shook hands and settled into his seat deliberately. Gerald's face got rigid as he answered briefly that he was going to Paris on business.

"Oh, *business!*" said the Honorable Charles. "That's all right. I thought it was the other thing — Muriel, you know. And there wouldn't be the slightest use, you know — not the slightest. My aunt's the greatest matchmaker in all England. She goes by the name of the Judicious Hooker everywhere. Confounded luck you've had, Mildmay, I must say. Of course, you know she's hooked Nokes the brewer for Muriel — landed him high and dry. It was announced yesterday. I — I beg your pardon, old fellow! What a duffer I am! Did n't you know it?"

Gerald had not said a word, but had grown so pale that even the Honorable Charles, who was one of the densest of men, and one of the kindest, for once saw and understood, and, as he afterwards said, "could have kicked himself from London to John o' Groats."

"I daresay there isn't a word of truth in it," he hastily added; "people talk so! And I get things most awfully mixed sometimes. I can't remember all the stuff that's going about, for the life of me." On he floundered, his face getting redder and redder: "You see, there are so many scandals nowadays that a fellow's *got* to have a good memory if he goes in for society at all — what husbands have run off with whose wives, and the divorced people, and who was an actress, and who's been kicked out of clubs, and all



that. Upon my honor, every other woman or man one knows has done some one of them, and sometimes all three. I cut a fellow the other day for his *fourth* thing; I'm sick of it! I ain't a governess, and I ain't a parson, but hang me if I would n't like a little respectability just for a change, as Medford says. You don't know Medford, do you? Awfully clever fellow. He might be of use to you if you want to go in for anything in the City. I'll introduce you, if you like. He offered to put me into tea if the governor ever turned crusty again. Would n't I have jumped at it when we were at odds, five years ago! I nearly starved. I could n't earn a morsel of bread, I don't believe, if I went in for being a crossing-sweeper. I tried everything—I mean I would have, if there had been anything. I was going to enlist in the Blues, but I found out that privates were not allowed a toothbrush, and a fellow can't give up his *toothbrush*, now, can he? But *you*'ll come out all right, old chap! You are clever like Medford."

He rattled on at a great pace for him, thinking to give Gerald time "to pull himself together." When the latter spoke, it was of quite other things, and as quietly as if he had not just heard a piece of news that had affected him so powerfully, and *reached* him so suddenly, that he had actually narrowly escaped fainting. He had rather more than the usual share of English reserve, and fortunately was spared the acute mortification of such a womanish proceeding, though, as he had been stroke-oar at his university, was a capital cricketer, and had demolished an impudent navvy only the week before, he could have afforded the weakness as well as any man in England. With English doggedness he had privately determined to know the truth from Muriel's own lips; in spite of the shock, never once thought of giving up the chase.

Nothing truer was ever said than that "every man is a bore when we don't want him," and he was much relieved when they reached Dover, where the Honorable Charles took himself off, thinking, "What a regular sell for the poor old fellow, all round! Old Mildmay first — what a *beastly* shame! And now Muriel. Fancy her marrying that brute of a Nokes! I would n't take him as footman."

Gerald was very leisurely in his movements as a rule. But he boarded the Calais packet-boat with a rush, carrying his umbrella, after a favorite masculine fashion, at "charge bayonets!" under his arm, and in this way very nearly spitted the very lady whom he was so hotly pursuing, on the gang plank. Seeing that he had come into collision with a lady, he dragged off his hat under difficulties, and made his apologies, or rather began to do so. She turned her head, and he cut them short with an astonished "Muriel!" He saw her change color, heard a faint "Gerald!" and pushed forward. She stiffened visibly at this, as he noted, and looked, as she felt, wretchedly constrained. Her mother, Lady Barbury, who was just beyond, now saw him, and looked as *she* felt, which was anything but glad to see him. And Gerald, glancing past Muriel, saw a floridly dressed, hopelessly vulgar little man, carrying an umbrella that he had himself given Muriel on her birthday, a pretty Parisian trifle, with her monogram set in the tortoise-shell handle. Gerald glared fiercely at the unconscious Nokes, and Lady Muriel nervously introduced them. Gerald's body underwent a sort of spasmodic contortion that had to do duty for a salutation. Mr. Nokes looked at him coolly and nodded slightly. They needed no introduction.

"Come and help me with these parcels, Mr. Mildmay. There are three missing," called out Lady Barbury, with a great affectation of ease and liveliness. But Gerald pretended not to hear.

"Shall I 'elp her?" Mr. Nokes asked, turning to Lady Muriel, and she, crimsoning over the missing *h*, but afraid of being left alone with Gerald, said hastily, —

"Oh, no; pray don't!"

Gerald had not lost this confidential aside. He heard but would not heed it.

It was he, in fact, who marshaled the pair across the deck, and, after they had seated themselves, Lady Barbury joined them and tried to engage Gerald in conversation, but quite failed. Mr. Nokes crossed his legs obtrusively, but held his tongue. Lady Muriel seemed to be undergoing the process of petrification. At last Lady Barbury went off to make an inquiry about some of her effects, and that moment Gerald, who had been sitting, grave and pale, on one side of Muriel, addressed Mr. Nokes, who was on the other.

"Will you kindly leave me alone with Lady Muriel for a few moments?" he said, quite determined to carry his point; "I wish to speak to her in private."

"Don't go away, Mr. Nokes," said Lady Muriel eagerly. "He can't have anything to say to me. I don't wish to hear it. I will not listen." Mr. Nokes stood irresolute.

"Then I shall stay until you do," said Gerald, and reseated himself quietly. Nothing could have been quieter than his whole manner and bearing, more destitute of anything like a threat or braggadocio. Lady Muriel was furious with him, but had a novel sensation. Belle and beauty as she was, she had not been used to the bit; she felt it slipped into her mouth as he spoke.

"You can go, Mr. Nokes," she said, and Mr. Nokes went.

"I shall only detain you for a moment, Muriel," said Gerald. "I have not come here to annoy you; to ask you to reconsider your decision; you need not be afraid of me. You have no persecution to fear from

me. I meant to have offered to release you when my troubles came, but you did not give me the opportunity. Do you suppose that I would have been selfish enough to insist on your keeping your word to a ruined man? I never felt ruined until I lost you, Muriel — lost the woman I had loved, rather. I confess I had a hope. There *have* been women who, under the same circumstances, would have been willing at least to wait and see what I could do — who would have felt for *my* distress: I have heard, read of such — women who have willingly given up everything and everybody to follow the man they loved to the ends of the earth. It was such a woman that I loved. Not that I would have exposed you to the least hardship for the world.”

“You are very unreasonable, Gerald. You say you meant to release me from my promise, and yet you blame me for giving you up,” said Muriel. “You see yourself that it is out of the question for you to marry *anybody*. I would have been a millstone around your neck. You ought to be very grateful to me, mamma says.”

“Not if you had cared for me, Muriel! Never! I am a man. Somehow, somewhere — had you had faith in me — I would and could have made a home for you. I don’t mean an ‘establishment.’ I mean a *home*. You were thinking of yourself, not of me. Why should I be grateful? For what? For being flattered and fooled into a perfectly false and degrading position by you and Lady Barbury as long as it suited your convenience that I should occupy it, and turned out of it without delay, scruple, without even an affectation of regret on your mother’s part, when it no longer suited your views? She dismissed me as if I had been an importunate and impertinent tradesman who had come between the wind and her nobility the last time I called. And you — I never saw such a change! If

I had been a felon, Muriel, and you had ever really loved me, you would have stood by me. When a prisoner is released at Dartmouth, when a soldier is flogged out of camp, there is always a woman or two waiting to receive and comfort him, be he ever so great a rogue, I have heard. And you call yourself a good woman, I suppose, Muriel? I can tell you one thing: more men have been sent to the devil by what the world calls good women than all the whole tribe of Magdalens put together, because men believe in them, respect them, love them. No matter how bad a man may be himself, he honors a good woman, or the woman he thinks good. And when he finds her thoroughly worldly, selfish, coarse, unfeeling, what is left to him? Tell me that. When he is jilted, say, simply and solely because he has lost his fortune."

"It is you, Gerald, who are coarse and unfeeling, talking in that way," said Lady Muriel indignantly.

"It is the *thing* that is coarse, not the words I have used to describe it. Don't you see that? But what is the use of saying anything more?"

"There is no use. You only distress me for nothing, and I have such a headache already," she replied whimperingly. "It is you who are selfish—to bring it all up again when it has all been settled. I could n't help your losing all your money. And of course it's dreadful for you. But I can't see why you are so unjust and unkind to me. I am sure I never was rude to you in the least, never! And it would have embarrassed you seriously if I had gone on with it. It was all perfectly hopeless and absurd. What else could I do, pray?"

"What could you do? Oh! Muriel, every word that you say condemns you. You ask me what you could have done? I am going away from England now, the most desolate creature in the world! I don't

care what happens to me—I have n't a hope, or a plan, or a wish left. But how different it would have been if you had been true to me, tender; loyal! I would not have asked you to share my exile. But if you had only been willing to go, to make sacrifices for me—if you had really cared for me—I would have died for *you*. And now I hear—look up, Muriel!—I hear something which is monstrous! I would n't believe it. I have come to you to know the truth."

He had risen and was standing in front of her, hat in hand, gazing down earnestly at the graceful figure, the beautiful face that yet was not beautiful—it was so lacking in tenderness, softness, so hard for all its rounded contours and lovely coloring, though Gerald's reproaches, her own anger and excitement, had given a certain brilliancy and spirituality to it for the moment. The sea breeze had blown a tress or two of fair hair across her forehead, which she was always putting back; her cheeks in tint and texture rivaled the petals of a rose; the whole character of her beauty was enchantingly delicate and high-bred, ethereal, virginal, full of all promise, and promising every perfection. But it was wonderful how the grain beneath showed—how the wholly material, commonplace nature that had been united to it made itself felt and seen; how the real woman was, as it were, photographed on the extremely sensitive plate of his mind unconsciously as he stood there, to be developed later in the darkness of his bitter mortification and disappointment.

As she nervously clasped her hands together in her lap, Gerald perceived that the left hand was ungloved. And on the fateful finger was a ring, a finger tombstone of a ring—a stone-cameo—on which the plebeian profile of Mr. Nokes had been engraved, and this surrounded with huge brilliants!

"Muriel!" he cried. "It is true, then. You *are* engaged to that man!"

"Yes," she said, lifting her eyes for the first time to his, and speaking defiantly; "I am going to marry Mr. Nokes."

"Of your own free will and accord?" asked Gerald, and she answered the passionate appeal of the question with a placid "Yes," relieved that the worst was over.

Without a word Gerald rushed away. It would have taken all the ropes on board to keep him a moment longer. Fortunately this little scene had passed quickly, so that he was able to rush on shore instead of into the water, the boat being not yet under way, the majority of the passengers still moving restlessly here and there.

He got back to Sloane Street haggard and white, utterly wretched and spent; and there, by way of cheer, found a letter from Mr. Hobson, of Hobson and Blow, Sir George Mildmay's solicitors, who were instructed to communicate to him certain facts. Sir George would pay all his debts. Sir George would allow him for the future 200*l.* a year. Any appeal from this ultimatum would be worse than useless.

"I'll *rot* before I'll touch a farthing of it! Thirty thousand a year, and he offers me two hundred, after bringing me up as his heir — through his solicitors, too. I'll pay my own debts, and he can go hang! This settles it. I shall go to America and earn my own living — or starve — leave England forever!" he decided as he marched up and down the little drawing-room, half suffocated by the violence of his feelings. He waved Giddings away, when that decorous functionary appeared with a tray, and left him standing in the middle of the floor secretly aghast, as he went into his bedroom, and closed and locked the door. Why we

do not die of some days in our lives is one of the mysteries of our existence. How can the galley-slave in us continue to exercise every function unconcernedly, when the angel that is linked to it is so grievously wounded, so sorely outraged ?



## CHAPTER II.

“How chances mock and changes fill the cup of alteration with divers liquors.” — *Henry IV.*


FOR a man of his position, Gerald had singularly few ties to bind him to his native land. He had lost both his parents when a child, and a brother a few years later. He had been adopted by his uncle Sir George, his father's only brother, and of near kindred he had, beside, only two aunts. One of these ladies had become an English religious about ten years before this time, and, for him, had practically ceased to exist, not from any unkindness or rupture of the relation on either side, but because their lives flowed in entirely different channels. The other had become the wife of Archdeacon Phipps-Thirwell, and had given him three cousins, of whom he had been very fond when they were all little lads together. But they had gone to Winchester, and he to Harrow; they to Cambridge, and he to Oxford; they into the Army and Church, and he into diplomatic life on the Continent later. Male cousins rarely see much of each other after childhood. As for connections, there was no lack of these on both sides of the house; but he had not attached himself to any of them, and his relations with them all were entirely formal if pleasant. He met them everywhere in society, and during the season, when in England, was entertained by them, and helped his uncle to entertain them in turn at “The Towers;” occasionally ran across them, now and again, in Rome, or Paris, or Brussels, and found

them neither more nor less agreeable to him than the remainder of the dear five hundred with whom he con-sorted. As to friendships, he was scarcely more fortunate, though he did not regard that tie as severely as the Spanish sage Prince Juan, brother of Alphonso the Wise, who thought that "he is a lucky man who, coming to old age, has contrived to make a friend and a half," and he could be a friend.

But so it was. He had been captain of Harrow, and had three chums there, of whom he always liked to think. He had at Balliol (where he took a Second Class in Mods.) made two friends, Arthur Mellin and Walter Fitzgerald, who had remained his friends ever since, but, as it chanced, neither of them was in England just then. So much for intimates. His acquaintances were legion. But if there is a thing that a man of the world perfectly understands, and generally acquiesces in, it is the estimate set upon him by such people. He sets it upon them in return, and neither expects to receive, nor is prepared to give, much in the way of sincere attachment or deep feeling. As fellow-motes in the sunbeam of prosperity they had been pleasant enough. He had danced with them at Embassy balls in Vienna; dined with them at the Trois Frères in Paris; boated with them, yachted with them, hunted with them, amused himself in every conceivable fashion in their company. But nobody knew better than he how the fashion of the fashionable world changeth, how fickle is its favor, how its waves close over any head that sinks beneath them, and obliterate every trace of the owner's existence. He knew of this world that it had quite strength enough to support its share of his misfortunes; that the most tragic occurrence cannot solemnize it, or long silence its babble; that it cannot hold its breath long enough to catch our last sigh, though

'we should give to it the unqualified devotion of a lifetime, pouring out upon it all the treasures of Golconda, and squandering in its service every energy of our nature and gift of earth and heaven.

He had often thought of its great figures that they would do well to remember that, in this world, it is always but a step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock. Already he had dropped out of it completely, as he knew, although in his way and degree he had been a decided favorite, and for many years of his life not only in it, but of it, emphatically. For some years past Gerald had been growing more and more discontented with the wages of the great firm of Mundus and Co., which seemed to him utterly disproportionate to the labor involved and the sacrifices demanded. And he hoped that he had found in Lady Muriel a great incentive to quite another and very different life, far better suited to a man of his tastes and temperament. He had given up the diplomatic service, meaning to settle down in England and "lead his own life" — by which he meant interesting himself in certain *dilettante* pursuits, as selfish in aim as those he had abandoned, but certainly more sane and satisfactory — until he should, in due season, succeed his uncle, and so enter upon a life that he considered then the most dignified and delightful that an English gentleman could desire, and an income that would permit him to indulge, to the fullest extent, his liking for rare books, old glass, and numismatics. He was not a man of any great achievements, but he had his ideals; his instincts were true; his nature refined; his training honorable in the highest degree. As for his affections, they had been a source of much pain to him, and more remorse. At nineteen he had fallen in love with the daughter of his uncle's bailiff, and been sent abroad with his tutor, and kept there until



completely cured. At twenty-three he had another attack of the unescapable malady, and this time had the misfortune to choose a German girl who preferred another man, a countryman of her own. On the rebound he fell into the hands of a very witty and brilliant Irish coquette, and then into Lady Muriel's — we know with what result.

His uncle had begun by doting upon him to an absurd extent as a child, had liked him as a schoolboy, endured him at Oxford, shaken hands with him metaphorically when he became a man. But as profoundly obstinate as he was radically selfish, having once made up his mind that he should be his heir, Sir George considered and treated him as such; insisted that other people should do the same. It was his one claim to distinction, in his mind, and they had remained on fairly good terms, thanks chiefly to Gerald's forbearance and good sense, until Sir George had married his housekeeper, which led to quarrels, crimination, and recrimination, ending in disinheritance and the communication given from Hobson and Blow, the family solicitors. Gerald, sitting in the stuffy little drawing-room of his lodgings in Sloane Street, or the stuffier dining-room into which it opened, or the stuffiest bedroom beyond that, felt like another Marius, and, look where he would, could see nothing but ruins. He had dismissed Giddings. He had returned all his wedding presents, and almost died of mortification in the process. He had sold his collections of coins and glass, and most of his old books, each with a history of its own, and many of them with an association, painful or pleasant, or both, between the leaves, that made them voluminous records, indeed, to him. He had burnt his letters, and felt that he had burnt his boats as he sickened over Sir George's letters to him at Harrow; Lady Muriel's fond notes; the

vivacious challenges of the *belle Irlandaise*; letters, letters, letters! from pastors, masters, acquaintances, friends; married, dead, disgraced, estranged. He felt the sting and stab of them all, severally and collectively. "Words, words, words," they seemed to him. All his past seemed summed up in them in one huge, all-embracing, all-comprehending 0. But that he felt it a duty to see where he stood, and know what he was doing, he would have tossed them all into the grate *en masse*, before he had gone half through the first packet, although it consisted almost entirely of invitations, "*Vous faire part's*," old play-bills, ceremonious biddings to stately festivities, cards, and the like. From these alone a clever biographer could have more than half guessed at his life, position, and wanderings for the last decade, a period full of gaiety and brightness, as they testified amply; yet not of the kind that leaves its long track of light behind it on the waves traversed — will-o'-the-wisp gleams, rather, that had attracted, mocked, deceived him in turn, only to leave him in the darkness of this Slough of Despond.

When he had half finished this depressing business he got up, and was sitting forlorn, indeed, at the window, when Eliza came in to draw the curtains, light the gas, make up the fire, and lay the cloth for his dinner. She was in her chronic state of haste; her cap, as usual, was awry, and not too clean. "It is impossible to say whether smudginess or rosinness predominates in Eliza," thought Gerald; "her skin and hair are all aflame, but a general duskiness pervades her whole person; her clothes look as though she used the coal-bin as a press. Poor wretch! What a life *she* must have of it!" As his eyes followed her clumsy movements he became aware, by her furious blushes and increased awkwardness, that the red had decidedly overpowered the black in her composition, and, being

a gentleman to his finger-tips, he threw back his head and gazed at the ceiling instead, much to her relief.

Under the new *régime* he had mapped out, economy was to be considered in everything, so that his dinner would have been a simple one at best. But at worst, it was very bad, indeed. The chops were half raw; the vegetables were such as in their nature required skillful treatment, for they were turnips and marrows, vegetables which have seen better days and were once fruits, perhaps, but are so pulpy and low-spirited in their present estate that only the most liberal allowance of cream and the richest seasoning can make them hold up their heads at all in good society. There were potatoes, to be sure; and there was a rice-pudding, also very tearful; and there was coffee, which was woefully watery, and bore small resemblance to the fragrant decoction Giddings had been in the habit of giving him — carefully distilled Mocha from an old German helmet-shaped pot that he had picked up in Prague, on which he had caused to be engraved Talleyrand's famous recipe, —

“Noir comme le diable,  
Chaud comme l'enfer,  
Pur comme un ange,  
Doux comme l'amour,”

—sold now, alas! with all his other effects of the kind. Gerald was manly and did his best. But Gerald had been sadly pampered. It was one thing to have a fine contempt for the world while he still had a fortune, and could despise it properly, philosophically, and most comfortably; and quite another when poverty, so far from being merely a picturesque point of view, threatened to become a long series of such dinners. The tarnished glories of the Belgravian bubble that had burst before his eyes that afternoon shone bright with a fictitious iridescent lustre when he laid down

his soiled napkin. Mayfair was again fair in colors not its own, seen from this vanishing-point. "The cup that sparkles only at the brim," which Fate had dashed from his lips, seemed again to be studded with jewels and to brim high with untasted or unexhausted delights, as Eliza, the red-handed, served the Barmecidal repast. For Gerald was a man, a civilized man, a hungry man, and bad dinners, like the toothache, are too much even for the philosopher.

"Who *cooked* this dinner?" he could not but ask, and frowned. But when Eliza, in a state of terrified confusion painful to witness, curtsyingly confessed that she had done the awful deed, "Mrs. Bott's bein' hout," Gerald was ashamed of his ignoble wrath, and gently asked her to "take down a chop and give it another turn," which she did with great cheerfulness. He girded up his loins and got the meal over, but it did not seem so much a dinner as a milestone, showing him how far he was from Vanity Fair, on the one hand, and from a digested and digestible future of some sort on the other. He went resolutely back to his unpleasant task, and was still at it an hour later, when Eliza tapped and entered, crimson as a hollyhock, bearing a tray — "'Opin' you 'll excuse it, sir, and 'avin' a lemon, I 've made bold, wich you 'ardly touched your dinner." The honest soul had taken her one poor little ewe-lemon and made him a drink. And it further appeared that she had "run out for a couple of buns and toasted them." And slavey though she was, of an uncompromisingly prudish type, and most unjustifiably ugly beside, the little womanly act made him a good deal less miserable (so penetrating and soothing is that sweet spirit of kindness that comes like a breath of heaven, blow from what quarter it will), and sent him to bed comparatively content, thankful that he was not a woman, at all events, but

could make his own way in the world; still more grateful that he was not a slavey in a London lodging-house.

In the next ten days he made as many pilgrimages as though he had been the most devout Catholic, though he was only a devout Englishman. He ran down to his old school, his *alma mater*, Oxford, his favorite cathedral, Exeter; took a last look at his own collection of Twelfth and Thirteenth century glass, which he had sold to Sir Montagu Moïse, in Kent; enjoyed a last hunt in Leicestershire, in mufti; and got a private view of "The Towers," unknown to Sir George. He went to see a few friends, but very few. One was the widow of an old schoolfellow; another his old nurse, Dawkins, who still doted upon him, would scarcely let him leave her, and stood at her cottage door, in Birket-Fostershire, looking after him to the last, which dimmed his eyes for a moment, as he thought, "Poor old Dawks! I don't suppose I shall ever see her again!"

On the 12th of December he heard from Mr. Butterworth, graciously bidding him come out by all means; stating that, as by his own confession, Gerald was wholly ignorant of farming, he had felt it due to himself to put the premium up in his case to eighty pounds, but that "board would be set at the very low figure of five pounds a month," with a few more particulars of the same sort, and suggestions as to the journey.

He now went to work and bought his outfit—an Indian one, acting on the advice of his aunt, Mrs. Thirwell, with whom he was in conference by post; saw to his guns with a view to sport; took his passage, and arranged to have his beautiful mare "Eu-linka" shipped.

He tried to get into light marching order, and suc-



ceeded in reducing his effects to a reasonably portable quantity for an Englishman. A proud man, he had always avoided debt, as men of his class count debt, but it gave him a distinct shock when he had settled his bills, and done all this, to find how little he had left. It even seemed absurd, the shock over. Still, America was a land of untold possibilities and magnificent probabilities. It would all come right, and anything was better, he thought, than "knocking under" to Sir George. As a matter of fact he had only the interest on a small sum that had come to him from his mother. It had been invested in some steel and iron works in Styria, when he was a child, and the little sum had long been a standing joke between Gerald and Sir George, who had delighted to allude to it as his "property," and to the time when he should "come into it." The French *chef* at "The Towers" got two thousand a year, and to both gentlemen it had seemed a droll idea that "the heir" should ever be reduced to that for his whole fortune.

"If I were a gamester I should be tempted to stake it all on a card, and, if I lost, chuck up my life as a failure, and blame the powers above for my wicked madness," thought Gerald as he looked into his purse and saw how slenderly it was furnished for the conflict before him. "It is fortunate that I have to make the fight alone, and that all this came *before* instead of *after* my marriage. Fancy Muriel turning squaw and cooking my beans and lentils, and making my coat of skins, while the young barbarians were at play! Now if I sink, it does n't matter to anybody; and if I swim — that does n't matter either. But, like Seneca's pilot, whether I sink or swim, I will keep my rudder true — if I can."

Having reached this manly conclusion, he took himself off to say good-bye to his aunt, Mrs. Phipps-

Thirwell, who had a villa not far from Pope's, at Twickenham, and had a particular and chronic dislike to that most unfortunate of men, which made it fortunate for her that they had not figured on the stage of this world at the same period. Gerald had brown-holland and bread-and-butter associations with his aunt that made her the only substitute for a mother that Fate had spared him. She had never been rapturously affectionate to him, or enthusiastically attached, but there had always been a placid comfortableness of secure kindness and good-will about her that was grateful to a man who had always been lonely even when he had most lived in crowds, and he had always fallen back upon it as upon a cushion, nor ever found it fail him. He did not expect her to understand him or sympathize with him, and was quite aware that they spoke for the most part different languages. She was anything but gifted, and had never said, understood, or countenanced a clever thing in her life; but if commonplace, she had excellences of a high order, and he admired in her the very qualities upon which she least prided herself. He might, and did laugh at her as a Bulgarian benefactress, and patroness of the Fijian League, and subscriber to the Chinese Flood Fund, and the Indian Famine Fund, and the Mansion House Colliers' Burial Fund, and the Deceased Firemen's Widows' Fund, and a host of other associations and charities and projects for ameliorating everybody's condition, in which she dabbled after a fashion of her own that amused him — investing capriciously in these benevolent stocks, withdrawing all aid from the Firemen's Widows, that she might give double to the Siberian Exiles' Daughters, muddling herself perpetually over her complicated accounts with "the deserving poor," and perfectly positive always that she was doing a great deal of good in a world that sadly needed

putting to rights, except when she was equally positive that she was doing no good at all. He chaffed her respectfully about her charitable designs, and poked fun at them and her slyly, chiefly for the benefit of his cousins. But he perfectly appreciated the fact that she was moved to make these attempts because of her great love for the memory of her husband, who had lived and died a poor clergyman, even after preferment came to him, being a man of rare unselfishness and nobility of character, whose whole life had been devoted to the humble fisher-folk of his Cornish parish first, and then to the poor of one of the great towns. Long after she became a widow, some money fell to Mrs. Thirwell unexpectedly, and she had borne about an anxious soul and harried conscience ever since, lest she should not be spending it as he would have wished, honestly lamenting that it had been given to her at all, and not to him. "The dear Archdeacon was so wise, so experienced, so just, he would have put every penny in the right place, and made it serve for two," she would say, and would then set herself dolorously to decide whether charity children or indigent females most needed her help, whether Tamil tea laborers or Italian vine dressers were the more miserably in need of a ten-pound note. The worthy lady had her little harmless vanity, too, about the pamphlets she wrote for the Cottagers' Defense Union of Ireland, and decided views about the Conservative attitude toward that island; about politics in general. But Gerald only remembered that she was a good mother, had been a good wife, was a good woman altogether, and he accorded her far more respect in these capacities than if she had been the most brilliant champion of Home Rule.

As for Mrs. Thirwell, she thought Gerald "a little unsound, affected by Continental influences, rather

inclined to levity sometimes, and sadly perplexing when one wants advice upon serious questions;" but then he had left England before he was old enough to get all the good he might have gained from her husband's example and influence—that accounted for all that was unsatisfactory. In the other scale she could find a great deal to cast; and was he not, next to her own boys, nearer to her than any other male creature? Her mild, maternal nature was moved when she thought of the changes that had come to him, and she had even thought for a moment that it might be her duty (to the Archdeacon) to make a grand sacrificial pile of widows and orphans, and exiles and victims, and colliers and governesses, and give him the money with which to retrieve his fortunes. That he should have to go to America was almost the worst feature of it all. She read Chateaubriand's "Atala," and "Paul and Virginia," that she might get an intelligent idea of his future, and she wrote him, most affectionately and copiously, all her impressions, ending with, "Not since my Herbert went to India have I felt so overcome by any prospect. Be sure that you don't forget your Cockle's Pills and the Angostura Bitters, which I hear on all sides are of the utmost value in those tropical savannahs: also prepared mustard plasters, which you can get of the 'Consumptive Chemists' Association,' 17 Wigmore Street, if you are not already supplied; and if you should not need them, they will be a most useful present to the poor natives."

Winter as it was, "Edgecumbe" Villa looked very charming without, with its vines clinging brownly to its walls, its fine Cedars of Lebanon overshadowing a stone balustrade that seemed of Italy rather than England, and its trim velvet lawn sloping down to the very edge of the Thames. Within was that delightful

combination of all that is pleasant and all that is useful, which is so un-Italian and essentially English, and which helps to make "home" the most charming word in our tongue, synonymous with comfort, privacy, peace, order, propriety, harmony, and a whole dictionary of adjectives beside. Admitted by a prim and pretty parlor-maid, Gerald walked into the drawing-room, and was struck afresh by its delightful air. "A French *salon* is a *bonbonnière*, the Continental one is either a state apartment, admirable as a throne-room or *salle des ambassadeurs*, or picture gallery, but hopeless to *live* in, or a barn for barrenness, and a tomb for chill mustiness," he thought; "but a room like *this*, now, is perfection—elegant enough for a reigning sovereign to miss nothing in the way of refinement, homely enough for any of his subjects to feel at home in it." His aunt walked in just then, and kissed him affectionately, and he told her that he was admiring it.

"How the sun floods the whole room, and is allowed to do so! I used to dislike those darkened rooms in the South, of all things, aunt. I always stumbled over a footstool, or a sofa, or a Roman princess when I made my grand entry, and my leavetaking was very nearly as disastrous. I used to threaten to carry a bull's-eye lantern about with me. And how comfortable it all looks here! It is raw out, very; and as you see, I have put myself where I can get what the Spanish call "the love of the fire"!

"That is right. I am so glad you like it. You ought to have a home of your own, Gerald, and in England. You would appreciate it now. It is dreadful, your going off like this. I really can't trust myself to think of Sir George at all. His conduct to you has been so extraordinary, so shameful, after all his promises, and bringing you up as his heir! And then

to go and marry a person, a creature like that, and cast you off without warning, or scruple, or proper compensation! I can't get over it! *You* must have been utterly amazed, dear boy."

"We will not discuss it, if you please, aunt," said Gerald. "His conduct has been disgusting, and the terms he proposed degrading. I have often thought him a screw in money matters; and his marriage was asinine; but I always thought him a gentleman. To write to me through his solicitors! It does n't do for me to think of him either, aunt. For the sake of the old days, I should like to do so respectfully if I could, but how can I, under the circumstances? So I had best not think of him at all, or as little as possible. Is Charles here? Ah! there he is." As he spoke, Charles Thirwell entered, book in hand, marking his place with thumb and forefinger, and looking like one of the stained-glass saints of Rouen or Gloucester Cathedral, Gerald thought. "I wonder how Charles manages, in this day and generation, while still a young man, too, to look so mediæval, monastic, tonsured, so spare, and middle-aged. He stoops more every day, and is getting positively pre-Raphaelite," he thought as they shook hands, and the curate seated himself. He made such a contrast to his fair, placid mother that Gerald was more than ever struck by her atmosphere of comfortable content, by his hollow cheeks and severe mien, emphasized in her case by her lilac gown and pink-ribboned cap, in his by the long lines of his black cassock, and an uncompromising biretta.

"You don't live up to your principles, Charles," said Gerald jestingly.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! nothing. Only if all flesh is grass, you ought to be a haystack at this season of the year, and I never saw you thinner. Are you well?"

"Very well, thanks," replied Charles.

"How *can* you say so, Charles, when you look as you do, and are feverish, and are so far from well!" interpolated Mrs. Thirwell, a fine pucker that was almost a frown starting out on her smooth, broad forehead.

She lifted a plump, white hand, very pretty and much beringed, and shook a finger at him, and Gerald looked at his cousin's mouth, which was bracketed in deep lines, at his eyes, which were deep-set and very thoughtful, at the three deep furrows between his brows, and the thin, deep-veined hand that still held his book.

"I cannot reconcile myself to Charles as aunt's son," he thought, as she addressed him.

"He is taking extra duty, Gerald, instead of sending for a doctor, and he has no intention of taking care of himself — not the least — or of going abroad — or anything. He will not hear of a warming-pan, or a fire in his room to dress by, for all it has a northern exposure."

"Mother would like to wrap me up in cotton-wool, tied with a blue ribbon, on the first of November, and put me in the hothouse until May," said Charles.

"I sent him up a nice hot breakfast this morning at ten, after his as good as promising that he would lie abed, and the next moment, back came Emma with a note to say that he had gone to Hillcote for early service — six o'clock these winter mornings, five miles away! He did it all last winter, when it would be so much nicer for everybody to have them the night before, as I have told Charles over and over again."

"I did not promise, mother; you are mistaken. I said, if I felt no better, I would stop at home, if Carstairs could take the duty. But I am better — I am, really. And if factory hands who are slaving all day

can get up at five in order to come to church, *I* ought certainly to be there," said Charles, with all his own invincible gentleness and the firmness which his enemies characterized as "obstinacy." "Unfortunately for your plan, we are not told to ask for our daily bread the night before. Thank you all the same for the breakfast; I ate it when I got back."

"And the coffee cold, and the toast a board. You'll be falling ill next."

"Oh, no, mother. But it does n't matter if I do. We all fall ill sometimes."

"Does n't matter! What do you mean? I should think it would make all the difference in the world, especially to a man who has set himself to convert all the Jews in London," said Gerald.

"I have n't 'set myself' to do anything. I have certain duties that I shall perform as long as I have the health and strength; when those fail me, I take it that I am either doing the right thing in the wrong way, or the wrong thing in the right way, and that in any event I am impeding the progress of the work, and am not needed. It is certain that all the Jews in the world can be Christianized without *my* assistance. About that I have no sort of doubt whatever."

"Meanwhile, what is to become of you? It is a minor proposition, I grant, but not without importance to some people — aunt, here, for instance," asked Gerald. "Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"That sounds as if you did n't care."

"I don't; in your sense. The only thing I have got to be careful about is that I shall be ready to go wherever I am needed. I have been offered a living at Trelawton. But I have not decided. There are grave objections."

"As to salary or work, Charles?"



"Both."

"Agricultural depression has affected the Church greatly, I know," said Gerald. "I hear that in Wales there are no tithes to speak of, and that, but for the baptismal and marriage and burial fees, the clergy would starve."

"They had far better starve than to take such fees, in my opinion."

"But what can they *do*?" asked Gerald. "You *are* a hopeless impracticable, Charles. It is a lucky thing you are not in politics. What *can* they do, pray? Starve?"

"Starve — and — pray; as you have just pointed out."

Gerald laughed, catching his cousin's grim smile. "The colors have struck in," he thought, figures of St. Blasius and St. Bobbio in his mind's eye; and, arranging two of the largest and softest cushions on the sofa at his back, said: —

"Charles, Charles, you have n't changed a bit! Men must live! A clergyman is a gentleman, and must live up to his position. The Church must go on, you know."

"Of course, it must," broke in Mrs. Thirwell. "I am always telling Charles so. Think of his objecting to Trelawton because it has too much pay and not enough work?"

"The objection is certainly original," said Gerald.

"And a beautiful, large rectory handsomely furnished, and a pony carriage left by the vicar, and the church closed all the week, the very thing for Charles in his state of health, and everything just as nice as possible. Did you ever hear of such a man as Charles?"

"Mother, don't talk of me, please. You don't understand. It is just because men must live forever, and the Church must go on, that a priest must

live up to his position, indeed," said Mr. Thirwell, moving about restlessly in his chair, a flush on his thin cheeks.

"A person, if you please, asking for you, sir," said Anna, the trim parlor-maid, appearing at the door suddenly.

"Take him into the kitchen, and say that I will be there in a moment," said Mr. Thirwell; and went on, "If the heavens are ever to rain down righteousness upon this nation, Gerald, it will only be when ministers are a flaming fire, and the people have ceased to worship the Prince of the Kingdoms of this world in their secret hearts, and openly, in most of their private and public acts, for six days out of seven; and on the seventh the Lord of poverty, suffering, humility, daily, life-long service for others, and willing anguish for a great end."

"You beg the question, Charles," said Gerald, his eyes following him as he walked up and down the room, his eyes fixed on the floor, his hands clasped behind him, his place still kept in his "Lacordaire."

"I was not talking of the millennium. You will concede a support of some sort to a clergyman, I suppose?"

"Yes. God and his own heart."

"No other?"

"None."

"You talk like a parishioner, rather than a priest, Charles; all your cloth do not think with you."

"Except these bonds, I wish they did."

"If debtors' prisons had not been abolished, that is where it would land them if they did. And what could they do? No fees, indeed!"

"Stay there until they were taken out."

"And suppose they were not taken out. What could they do then?"

"Rot, rather than concede a principle — excuse me."

He left the room. Gerald had got a little heated by the discussion, but now recovered his man of the world equilibrium, and laughed. "Just the same old Charles, aunt," he said.

"Yes; isn't he the most unreasonable man that ever was! He is just like the dear Archdeacon — only worse! I don't know what I shall do with him. As like as not, he is giving away what remains of his winter outfit this moment. It is really quite dreadful. I can't keep him supplied, do what I will. And he is so respectful, and considerate, and affectionate, that I really can't scold him as I should, and that makes it quite unbearable, sometimes. Nobody knows what it is to have a son as good as Charles! Not that he would deliberately vex me for the world. But he *lives* in slums and such places, and eats anything, anywhere, at any time, or goes without; and I am always in a fright about him, with the fevers, and colds, and all that, and he with no idea or intention of taking care of himself. It is really awful."

"Being a saint by proxy is a piece of business I can well imagine," said Gerald, who had often been amused to see in what an uncomfortable position his aunt had been placed by being born a placid, contented, this-worldly woman, and made the wife and mother of two men devoted heart and soul to another. She was devoted to them, fortunately, but for all that was kept suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between earth and heaven, unable to live in either.

"So respected and loved as he is, too. It is really most gratifying, only whenever I get a telegram, I always turn cold, thinking he has caught typhus, or cholera, or *something*. If he were like Mrs. Dobrie's son, who has done everything, really everything that

is most wicked and dreadful, he could scarcely keep me more anxious, Gerald."

"I see. I don't know anything more respected in our day and generation than that kind of man; or less imitated. Charles is a perpetual protest against the trivial, impertinent, shallow; against snobbishness, display, covetousness, materialism, and all our most salient virtues."

"How can you? You are laughing at him," said Mrs. Thirwell reproachfully.

"Not I, aunt! I have a sincere respect for him, and, after a long course of Frenchmen, I should like — Ah! there he is!"

Mr. Thirwell entered and seated himself, looking rather conscious, and avoiding his mother's eye, whereupon she rose, and hastily left the room.

"Now, Gerald, tell me about yourself, and all your plans and arrangements," he said. "I wished to be of use, but you wrote there was nothing I could do."

The sun, which had been westering all the afternoon, had now dropped quite out of sight behind a low, black range of cloud mountains. Not a ray was left in the pleasant room. But the true history of every soul, the Book of Life, is clearest seen in the dark, for it is always suffering written in letters of fire, and in sympathetic ink. Only those poor sinners in whose veins runs the same fluid red with kindred follies and vices, or those sweet saints in whom it has turned milk-white with human kindness and divine pity and love, can read it at all.

The firelight concealed as much as it revealed, and as Mr. Thirwell listened he turned a more and more softened face towards his cousin. The rigidity and frigidity died out of it, as he listened, and his sympathy was so genuine, his replies so intelligent, his insight so penetrating, that Gerald's reserve was not alto-

gether proof against them, and he let drop a few words here and there, that told all his story, his worldly disaster, his wounded pride, his disappointed love, and the consequent loss of faith and hope that is the saddest result of such blows. They talked on about his future, his past, and life, and love, and duty, and Mr. Thirwell showed a little of his heart, and did Gerald as much good by that as by anything he said, well and earnestly as he spoke.

"The worst of it is that I have lost all my faith in women, Charles!" said Gerald from his dark corner. "I have lived in the world. I am no saint. But I had kept my ideals until lately. I thought I should find them realized in an English girl, if anywhere. I think most men of refinement stand eager, reverent, expectant, before a veiled image of divine womanhood for many years of their life, and then marry a fool, a virago, an adventuress, a flirt, or a mass of worldly ambition, or respectable, uninteresting commonplace, and the veil is lifted on a Phryne, a Xantippe, a deep disappointment or degradation of some kind. I shall *never* trust a woman again. I shall never marry."

"Then you will lose the best of human treasures—a good wife. She is of no nation, or time, and she certainly exists here, and is to be found everywhere in the world. We have ample testimony on that point," replied Mr. Thirwell quietly. "Perhaps you will find her in America—when you have done something to deserve her."

"Nothing more unlikely," said Gerald. "I have not liked the American women I have known, certainly; at least, would not in that capacity. They have struck me as artificial, overdressed, and outrageous flirts. They are mad after gaiety, bundles of nerves, and as restless as the sea. I can get all that, with more refinement, and safer, pleasanter antecedents

at home, without crossing the ocean at all. That is, I could if I were a purchaser. It is in the market."

"Now I am *ashamed* of you, Gerald," said his cousin emphatically.

"Oh, Charles! Have you given away the *new* one? I can't find it anywhere," said Mrs. Thirwell, coming in, her brows in a pucker.

"The new what? Oh! the overcoat! Yes."

"But it was perfectly new!"

"So much the better; age and holes would not improve it, and Moffatt is very much exposed. Don't mind! There's a dear mother. Pretend that it was I needing it, not he, and you will be quite satisfied."

"Where is this going to end? Charles, you really have no right to try me as you do. Even your father would disapprove, I am sure, if he were alive. I never could keep him in a second-best anything, but you —" began Mrs. Thirwell solemnly.

Anna, however, appeared with lamps and announced "Dinner is served, Mem," at that moment, and Charles rose, bestowed upon his mother a smile of extraordinary sweetness, a kiss, and saying, "There, there, it is all right now, isn't it?" offered her his arm.

"If only the collar had not been of silk velvet, dear!" she sighed.

Now Mrs. Thirwell was nothing if not a house-keeper, and a very delicious, highly civilized meal was the one now served, and one guest did it more than justice.

When a worldly man is wounded in the immortal part of his nature, he is almost sure to drop from this great height into some excess far below the level of his ordinary misdoing.

So now, though Gerald had never been a gourmand, he rubbed his hands as if he beheld the greatest good

that life could afford when his *Potage à l'Impératrice* was set before him, and his eyes sparkled as if he had been a Silenus when to good was added better and best.

"You are a sensible woman, aunt," he said. "You will live well in spite of Charles and all his sermons. Happiness thy name is, Soyer! You should have seen my dinner yesterday in Sloane Street. It was poison." Here he looked his lively dissatisfaction so expressively that his aunt laughed heartily.

"Now that I think of it, I don't see the use of going to the colonies at all, when there are well-dowered maidens to be had for the asking, and cooks like yours, aunt, to be found in England, to say nothing of the home of the paper-cap and *bain-Marie* — France." And though he was half jesting it cannot be denied that he was half serious, and ate with a satisfaction which he felt, without regret or disgust, to be gross. He also drank more than he usually did, and did not mind his cousin's grave glance in the least when he was refilling his glass again and again. "*Entrées* at least do not deceive nor Tokay disappoint," he thought. He felt rather choky when the favorite tart of his childhood was served by his aunt. He talked first brilliantly and then scarcely at all. He left for town by an early train, laden with Mrs. Thirwell's advice, counsels, good wishes, and a little package of her pamphlets "for the poor blacks." Charles walked with him to the gate, and, as they parted, said, "I am sorry I can't see you off. Get to work as quickly as you can, Gerald — and if things should not go well with you, if you need help, write to me without a moment's hesitation."

Gerald thanked him and promised, and the two men shook hands and parted.

The day following Gerald went down to Liverpool

with all his impedimenta, and on board his steamer, his heart as heavy as lead. He felt that he was leaving England forever, and no longer was sensible of the centrifugal forces that were driving him from her; only of the centripetal ones that drew him to her breast as to a mother's, by a thousand tender ties that thrilled through all his blood and nerves and brain. He was staring fixedly and dismally at the leave-takings going on around him, and thinking that there was no one to bid him good-bye and God-speed out of all the people whom he had known and loved and feasted in his native land, when a hearty blow and a "Well, old man!" made him turn. It was the Honorable Charles Barbury, and the honest fellow had not only come from Scotland to see him off, but had brought a goodly supply of cigars and "cham" and French novels for his consolation. Gerald's eyes filled, and he had to walk away for a moment. We pour out our very life-blood upon some heads and into some hearts, and gain indifference, pity, dislike. We give a few careless words and smiles in the course of ordinary fellowship with others, and are amazed to find ourselves regarded with gratitude and love for a lifetime.

"From my uncle, from Muriel, there has not been a word or line; and here is Barbury come down all the way from the Trossachs with a boat-load of stuff for me," thought Gerald, and much gratified that gentleman by the way he wrung his hand at parting.

When the steamer got fairly off, Gerald, intending to light a cigar, felt in his pocket for his match-case, and came suddenly upon a serpent instead, in a handsome silver one Muriel had given him, that he did not know was there. He flung it overboard as soon as he saw what it was. "I have done with her; I have done with women," he thought, and though he



frowned darkly enough, and though his heart was full of a great wretchedness, he was an Englishman, and only showed it by this outburst, and was presently smoking and taking his constitutional, as if he had the life of the happiest of men to preserve.

### CHAPTER III.

“Heartily know, when half-gods go,  
The gods arrive.”

*Emerson.*

Now that England is anchored off the Battery, a voyage across the Atlantic in fine weather is scarcely more eventful than going down Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol in the street cars. Interesting things may and do happen anywhere, and dangers drop from the skies ; but the time is past for us to associate the idea of adventure with the treadmill transit of travelers from either shore to the other. Gerald Mildmay, sore of heart, and never given to making casual acquaintance with people in general, fought very shy of people in particular. There were the mothers with many daughters (and more effects), blocking up the deck and passageways, whom he avoided individually and collectively. There were the men in Scotch caps who were forever looking out for something that never appeared, with glasses that they declared to be very fine and powerful. The pool people and shuffle-board people he fled from, and the musical people he felt inclined to bind and gag. His place at table was next that of a particularly pretty girl from New York, to whom he was gravely civil when obliged to avoid being considered either eccentric or a savage ; but so glaringly inattentive was he, and so evidently unimpressed by charms that had been generously recognized at home and abroad, that this vivacious young person

without hesitation assured several persons that he was "certainly married and slightly deaf."

There was a Brummagem "party," who pretended to be a lord of high degree, gave himself many airs in support of that imaginary *rôle*, and led captive most of the passengers, but was detested by Gerald.

There was a little man of the most unpretentious and unassuming kind, who gave himself no airs of any sort whatever, whom Gerald could not place just at first, but knew by sight, and finally remembered as Lord Buddicombe, a "belted" earl.

The first of these gentlemen was disposed to be on the best possible terms with Gerald, but, meeting with repeated and decided rebuffs, turned crusty, and called him "a cad" to the ladies.

The second came up to him the first day out and held out his hand with a "How do, Mildmay? Remember me? Met you at the Blundells'." Some talk followed between them:—

"Going to do the States? I am," said his lordship.

"No; I am going to turn farmer in Virginia, as soon as I have learned to know mangel-wurzel from Indian corn," said Gerald.

"I am not going to the tropics this time; I wish I were. Have n't time, this time, you know, to do the whole country; it is such a confoundedly big country, and sprawls over so much space."

"I hear that one is always getting to places," said Gerald, "and 'never is, but always to be blest.' But then the facilities for doing so are said to be capital. Not that I expect to make much use of them. My traveling days are over."

"Oh!" (There was *something* about him — what was it! "Gone to pot somehow," thought Lord Buddicombe.) Then aloud — "Nobody with you, is there?"

"No, I am quite alone," said Gerald, and smiled, perceiving his mental process. "My nose is broken, that is all. I am no longer heir to anything but the common stock of human miseries. My uncle has married his housekeeper, and has a son."

"I knew there was a woman in it!" exclaimed Lord Buddicombe.

"Of course! *Cherchez la femme*," said Gerald.

"I thought you were nabbed — some other fellow's wife — that kind of thing. You were so huffy with *the lord* yesterday; I heard you bluffing the little beast. I *did* hear that you were engaged to — let me see — to —"

"Will you have a cigar?" said Gerald suddenly, and his companion took one and the hint; while lighting it he remembered Lady Muriel's name, the whole story, and thought, "*Two* women! Oh, I say!" After some further conversation and a smoke, he said to Gerald: —

"If you should have occasion to address me or speak of me while we are aboard, may I ask you to remember that my name is — *Smith* — *John Smith*?"

"My memory is not always to be trusted, but I think I can promise that," said Gerald. "You know there's a new theory that we English are all Jews, and the only hope we have of disproving it is furnished by your family. The Talmud says there 'was no Smith in all the land of Israel.'"

"I see! Very good, very good! You see, I don't want to be my-lorded, and entertained, and all that. I hate the 'hurrah' business at home — always did. And I don't want to be married, either, by one of those clever little Yankees! Dodged the petticoat so far; but they have a twist from the wrist that knocks down the British ninepin every time — confound 'em! They won't get me, though. Remember, now, *Smith* is my

name, and *cutlery* is my line, if you are pressed. Who is the lady that sits next you at table? Devilish pretty! Built on beautiful lines, is n't she? Reminds me of — hang it! — you know — in the classics — something to do with a swan."

"Leda?" suggested Gerald.

"Yes, yes!" replied his lordship, much pleased and relieved: "Leda. You'd better keep a sharp lookout, Mildmay, or that swan will cook your goose! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Could n't you introduce a fellow?"

"Of the name of Smith? I'm afraid not."

"Jealous already?"

"Not I! Not the least iota. You are welcome to the whole female population of the States as far as I am concerned, I assure you. I never expect to marry; but if I ever should, the lady will not be an American. I think of choosing her from some other planet, indeed, where women are fair without being false, and good without being dull, and domestic without being or becoming bores, accomplished and charming without being dangerous, and clever, yet not prigs — in short, perfection."

"You seem to have thought a lot about it! And you've got a pretty good opinion of *yourself* to go in for all that, I can tell you, Mildmay," commented Lord Buddicombe disapprovingly. "You want the earth, as the Americans say."

"No, I don't. Haven't I just told you that I despair of finding what I want on earth?"

"Well, if you are so tremendously fastidious as all that, what do you say to giving up your seat at table to me? I'm awfully bored, and that little clipper-built girl would amuse me no end, as like as not."

"Willingly! Only it is a scientific fact that bullets penetrate a Smith as swiftly as a Buddicombe, I warn you!" said Gerald. "You'd better look out!"

"Ah! but you see she wont *want* to marry me! That is the beauty of the thing! She won't *want* to! I thought of that! And *I* am like you. I don't mind *amusing* myself a bit in a gentlemanly way with American girls, but when it comes to marrying—and I suppose it will have to come to that some day—I shall, of course, marry at home."

The proposed exchange was effected after some negotiation and consultation between the gentlemen concerned, waiters, steward, and officers of the ship. Gerald, greatly to his relief, found himself between two men who gave all their attention to their meals, and left him free to hold his peace, and think his own thoughts. And from time to time, a glance at Lord Buddicombe assured him that he was even better pleased.

The lovely Leda's long neck was gracefully, studiously turned away from Mr. Smith for a day, as if she half suspected that there was intention, not accident in the change, and she was haughtily unaware of Gerald's existence for the remainder of the voyage, which amused him a little even in his melancholy state, as it did to see that in three more days a Smith-Leda Association, Limited, had clearly been inaugurated.

From his position he could only occasionally catch a glimpse of her piquant, sparkling face, but he could plainly see the effect of her audacious sallies mirrored in that of his flushed and fascinated friend. And as he would have felt it a bore to be "barnacled with Buddicombe" just then, he was not sorry to see that gentleman, as time went on, attach himself to whatever person or persons chanced to be with or near this lady on deck, and in the cabin, morning, noon, and night. Gerald, looking on half sadly, half contemptuously, remembered certain of his own follies and sins, was not cheered by the spectacle, and thought, "She

is evidently a thorough-paced American flirt; but there is no use telling him so. 'Nos passions sont les seuls orateurs qui persuadent toujours.' The affair will either drop of its own weight, or the 'clipper-built swan,' who is sailing all around him and sinking him at every shot, will draw him on in her wake until she gets tired of him, and then leave him in the Slough of Despond while she swims gracefully away with a more eligible party than *Mr. Smith*. Unless he wants to cut his throat with his own knives, he had better get his coronet out of his pocket as soon as possible. A good fellow, I should say — Charles says the world is full of wasted materials for happiness, and I suppose it is, if one could only get them made up and properly apportioned. But it seems to me that either warp or woof is rotten, and there is no shaping a future out of such stuff. It is absurd to see the way every creature on this ship is delighted to do the bidding of that girl, and more flattered by her least word and smile than if she were Florence Nightingale or Elizabeth of Hungary. Beauty is one kind of credit, and gets a good deal more than it ever pays for — that is certain."

The two men went down to have a look at Eulinka in her stall the day before they got in, and never was horse more glad to see a master. Gerald's face lightened and brightened for the moment as he patted and inspected the sensitive, affectionate creature, and fed her with oil-cake. "'They're better nor human,' as Bob Jakin said of his dog! Give us a hoof, old girl. There! there! Don't be putting back your ears. It is only a Smith, and you've met many a one before! How do you like her?" said Gerald after a brief silence, Lord Buddicombe smoking and looking on.

"Very much. She improves on acquaintance. She's positively *charming*."

Gerald stared and then laughed. "If he has no

eyes for *Eulinka*, he 's a gone Englishman!" he thought, and then they talked of horses for an hour, and agreed to see New York together, and Gerald abandoned all intention of warning him against a perfidious siren. The announcement that they were approaching New York only oppressed Gerald the more, and he spent most of the night making himself acutely miserable, thinking of England and all he had lost, and missed, and left there. The beautiful harbor when they entered it touched his fine spirit and aroused his admiration, but in it all he saw only what it held for him, "a stranger going to live among strangers; a foreigner who will never feel himself anything else; a respectable pauper whom ill health or utter failure may reduce to the level of a tramp; an exile whom nobody regrets or misses 'at home,'" — as he bitterly put it. And in all the confusion about him he heard only the sad voice within telling him how different it might have been. As they were about to land, Lord Buddicombe came up to him and said: —

"I say, old fellow. I'm very sorry, but I think I shall have to go to another hotel further up town. Yours is too far out of the way, I find. You don't mind?"

Gerald, who had clung insensibly to the last English plank left of his shipwrecked fortunes, and was beside sensitive to a fault, said coldly and quickly, "Not in the least. We English leave England for the express purpose of getting rid of each other," and bowed and walked away, thinking, "Too far from what? The park, I suppose, or Trinity Church! Ass! she'll grind him to pulp!" leaving Lord Buddicombe staring after him, uncomfortably conscious that he was offended. This incident decided Gerald not to see New York at all, persuaded him, indeed, that there was nothing there worth seeing. He stared about him a bit, at the



streets, the shops, the people, the signs, the advertisements, noting with some amusement one poetical chemist's "Purest, rarest, freshest medicines sold here!" He glanced up at the telegraph, telephone, electric-light wires and poles; at the "tram" running down the centre of Broadway, and the eager, anxious, restless procession that thronged its sidewalks, and seemed to need only a band and banners to represent a perpetual demonstration of some sort. He stopped at a ticket-office and inquired about trains, and smiled when the official in charge told him that he could "put him down in Chicago, nine hundred miles, in twenty-four hours," had quite a talk with him and recovered his equilibrium, for in the course of it his annoyance vanished. Not having the manner which gives such offense in America, the manner that takes a large amount of deference for granted, he was cheerfully given all the information he needed, and shown "how we do the thing in this country;" and when all his modest and civil inquiries had been answered, and arrangements made for shipping his effects immediately to Virginia without the least trouble or care to himself, the clerk offered him a cigar, which Gerald pleasantly accepted, without showing the surprise he felt.

Then came dinner at his hotel, after which he drove down to the ferry. He could not stand the stuffy atmosphere of the cabin with its long rows of passengers resting on their arms, impatiently waiting for the rush to come, so he took himself and his cigar outside. Here he looked about him with delight, or rather that temperate satisfaction which is yet sincere pleasure in the English breast, though to the more enthusiastic and emotional American it seems but a tepid, not to say aggravating, substitute for it. And now came the thoughts and fancies that might have

been expected to spring up spontaneously with his first view of the great city and country before him; the play of that imaginative faculty which is not at our beck or call, and eludes, defies calculation as to times and seasons. Then, he had seen only himself. Now, he forgot that "heritage of woe," as, in the half gloom, with the musical mystery of the rushing waters beneath, and the still beauty of the heavens above him, he looked from point to point of the harbor and saw Columbia's fairest daughter decked in all her jewels, and sitting glad and majestic before the gates of her people.

As he mused, his thoughts naturally reverted to himself and his own affairs, but with a new element of hope and cheerfulness in them. What might not be lying for him behind those gates of good fortune and happiness? All about him suggested victory, triumph, prosperity. He had been defeated on one field, but here was another day, another land, and "the sun of Austerlitz" might be about to rise. He had been sorely wounded, but was not slain. All that was past, and he prayed Heaven mutely, unconsciously, but sincerely, that he might forget it, and make a new world for himself on this friendly and fortunate soil.

There was nothing striking to him about the remainder of his journey, except its length, which was almost alarming. It seemed to him that he had crossed the Continent by the time he got down into Virginia, but this was partly due to strange surroundings and physical fatigue as well as impatience. The cities and towns appeared to be but diminutions and repetitions of New York, through which he was whisked without delay; the changes puzzling and numerous; the number of rivers crossed remarkable in their number and importance; and the negroes whom he saw through the rain-splashed panes of the car window, at every station after leaving Baltimore, the most novel of the strange

sights about him. After a last change of cars had been effected (for the worse, since it had put him into a very dismal and dirty carriage on a local train, that stopped on the slightest pretext), he got some relief from the desperation engendered by this last and most trying stage of his journey by watching these "curious creatures."

At last, when halts had been made at every town, and hamlet, and collection of shanties, and water-tank on the road, and frequently in the open country, with no excuse at all for doing so that Gerald could see or discover (by questioning and cross-questioning the guard), he heard it announced that Cooperstown would be the "next stop." To his disgust the train crawled on for three quarters of an hour more, and pulled into his station just as his very last grain of patience was slipping away.

He gathered up his belongings and got out. To look for Cooperstown was his next step. There were a few "huts" dimly visible, a long shed of a station, to which he made his way. On the platform he found a group of roughly dressed white men, and some black ones gathered about a negro man and woman who were dancing a "break-down," while a negro fiddler was jigging up and down in sympathy with them, his head on one side, his instrument tucked under his chin, his face beaming with amusement. So engrossed were they that nobody paid any attention to such an insignificant arrival. The train moved off.

"They seem as jolly as post-boys, thinly clad, and in tatters, too, and dancing at two o'clock in the morning!" thought Gerald, and then he had to say, "Here, my man," and "Porter!" several times before he could get an alert "Yessah, yessah!" from the revelers.

The fiddler looked "the most respectable of the lot," and he gave up to him his rugs and parcels, and asked

if a carriage were not waiting to take him to Mr. Butterworth's house.

"Dere ain't no kedge here, sah," said his new attendant.

"There must be. Go and see about it," said Gerald. "I telegraphed."

He made inquiry himself, and looked in every direction for the vehicle in question, but none was visible, and the ignorance of the shabby fellows who were slouching about the platform was only equaled by their indifference and apathy. They "had n't seen no carriage;" they "did n't believe none had been sent;" they "reckoned he'd better sit down somewheres and wait till morning, and maybe it would come along." It further appeared, after courteous inquiry on Gerald's part, that he might "go on to Wyvvern and get a carriage there," and so he might — only the train was gone. Could he get a conveyance of any kind?

"Bill, you've got a cart. Can't you haul this man over to Butterworth's? You generally does his haulin'," said one of them to a companion.

"No, thank you," put in Gerald, staggered a good deal by this plunge into the land of the free and easy. "I don't care to be 'hauled' anywhere. How far is it?"

The owner of the cart said seven miles, his friend declared it to be six, but advised him to ask "Uncle Dan'l," the fiddler.

"It's nigh on to five, but 'pears to be more, fur yer goes up-hill so much on de way, sah," was that artist's verdict, given, as he would himself have said, "judgmatically," one hand rubbing the back of his head, the other scratching a tuft of gray hair on his temple.

"Oh! is *that* all?" said Gerald cheerfully. "That is all right. Come along, my man, we'll walk it."

"Lor', master! you ain't talkin' ur walkin' all dat

way dis time ur night, and black as pitch, is yer?" remonstrated Uncle Daniel.

"Of course I am. That's nothing of a walk. You know the way, don't you?" asked Gerald.

"Yessah. I knows de *way*. But dat ain't gettin' over de *ground*."

"Come, come, my man, we ought to do it in an hour easily. Here, hire a lantern, and we'll be off," said Gerald. He pulled out his purse, and Uncle Daniel, convinced by what he saw, rather than by what he heard, did as he was bid. Off they trudged accordingly down a muddy lane, and then into the highroad, laden with Gerald's effects, and on they went mile after mile, Uncle Daniel's stooping form and bow-legs a bad match for Gerald's long and strong British stride. His queer old black face was an amusing study to Gerald, with its network of wrinkles, its lips sullenly protruded, its display of white eyeballs, made intermittently visible by the lantern he carried—it quite fascinated him, indeed; and the old man's unwilling pace, and way of turning out his feet at an angle so acute as to defy Saxon imitation, made him wish for a pencil or crayons and a bit of paper that he might perpetuate them. At one point in the road the roll of Uncle Daniel's eyes became even more striking than before, and Gerald noticed that he seemed to sidle nearer and nearer to his side.

"What is it? See anything, Daniel?" he asked.

"No, sah! But I *mought*. Dere's a ghos' walks here. Dere was a man got murdered here five years ago. De stiff laid under dat tree yonder till morning, and he ain't never gwine rest in his grave. No, sah!"

"Pleasant!" thought Gerald. "I am not armed. What sort of hole have I got into? Are n't we almost there, Daniel?" he asked, after a while.

"Yer comin' up on it. You'll git dere bimehy, sah," replied Uncle Daniel, and walked on slowly in respectful silence for some time.

"Can you see it?" asked Gerald, a good deal later, anxiously.

"No, sah. You turn off dis road presently, and take anoder, and den you see dere a wood; and den you go 'long till you come to a salivation, and den de house emanates from de back, and dere you is, sah," said Uncle Daniel, and on they kept again for a much longer time.

"Surely the wood is in sight *now*?" said Gerald at last.

"I don't see no wood," remarked Uncle Daniel casually.

"But we must have walked at least six miles, Daniel."

"Yes, I reckon we is, sah."

"And there is no wood in sight!"

"Dat's so, sah."

"But you said we were coming to it," said Gerald, hotly. "Where are we? Can you tell me that, Daniel?"

"Dey calls me Unc' Dan'l round here, sah. Nobody ain't called me Dan'l sence old master died," said his guide reprovingly, with much dignity. "I dunno where you done brung me to. I ain't never been over dis road, but dey tells me —"

"What! Do you mean to say that you don't know where you are? That you have never been here before?" exclaimed Gerald, turning around and facing him.

Uncle Daniel had seated himself on the roadside, and put the lantern down in front of him. His face was a study now, indeed. Not a word did he answer.

"Don't you hear me? What do you mean by pre-

tending to guide me to a place that you know nothing about?" stormed Gerald.

"Didn't I *tell* you, sah, not to come? Ef I had n't er come wid you, you'd er lors yourself, shore! I dunno whar dat house gone to! Wait till I ketch my bref—good—I got a powerful misery in my side; and den I'll git up and see if I see whar dat house is," replied Uncle Daniel calmly. "I reckon it's round here somewhurs, ef it ain't been pulled down."

"Pulled down!" repeated Gerald, who had no knowledge of African tactics, peculiarities, or character.

"Or burnt up," Uncle Daniel added.

"What do you mean? What makes you suppose that?" demanded Gerald, utterly at sea. Had there been some disaster of the kind? Was this the reason the carriage had failed to meet him? "Have you heard of its being destroyed?"

"No, I ain't zackly heerd 'bout it," Uncle Daniel admitted; "but may be it's so widout *my* hearin'."

Completely nonplussed, Gerald stared at him, and tried to solve his enigmatic utterances, and decide what to do.

Just at this moment, from the bare branches of a locust-tree overhanging the stone fence behind Uncle Daniel came a wild demoniacal shriek, a "Who-hoo! hoo!" that seemed uttered in their very ears, and palpitated on the frosty air for a moment in prolonged weird recessions. Startled, but interested, Gerald picked up a stone to "have a shy at the fellow," but heard a rush and flap of wings overhead, a cry of "De ghos'! De ghos'!" the clatter of an overturned lantern; and there, prone in the dust, his hands clapped over his ears, was Uncle Daniel at his feet, only dimly visible, but uttering, in an agony of terror, moans and groans that were enough to appall Dugald Dalzetty himself, and "calling upon all the saints in Paradise and for ten miles round."

Utterly confounded, Gerald bent over him. Was it an epileptic seizure? A *ruse* of some sort? Was this an idiot, a madman, a murderer? All sorts of possibilities and probabilities rushed through his mind.

"What's the matter? Get up! What are you doing there?" he roughly demanded.

But Uncle Daniel continued prostrate, uttering his litany of terror.

Gerald slapped first one pocket, then another, briskly; came upon his match-case at last — always out of the way when most needed — picked up the lantern, relit the candle, and saw Uncle Daniel, sitting up now, in the road, but still very ashy, and with eyes rolling about, around, above him in a fine frenzy that the greatest poet might have envied.

"You heard it yourself, massa," he said, in low, awestruck tones.

"The owl? Of course I heard it. Do you mean to say that you are afraid of an *owl*?" asked Gerald angrily, getting a gleam of light on the situation, which had no absurdity for a man who was half dead with fatigue, a good deal alarmed, and unutterably disgusted.

"No, sah. I ain't 'fraid er *no owl* dat was ever hatched," said Uncle Daniel, dusting his knees, and rising to his feet. "But dat ghos' " —

He stopped, and looked behind him. The world beyond that shaft of yellow light was all ghosts for him.

"Pick up those things," commanded Gerald. Uncle Daniel obeyed, his knees and lips well out in expressive dissatisfaction, and the "misery in his back" strongly suggested as he stooped. "Now look at me. Have you the least idea where you are, or how to get to that house?"

"'Cose I is, sah. I gwine bring you dere all right. We 'd bin dere now if you had n't took dee wrong road," said Uncle Daniel reproachfully.



"There is no use arguing with this old idiot," thought Gerald; and said aloud, as if placated, "See here, my man, you get me to Mr. Butterworth's as quick as you can, and I'll give you another dollar. If you *don't* manage it, somehow, I'll take my stick to you, that's all! You must know something about this country. You must have lost your way."

"Pete did tell me sumfin' 'bout turning off dere by Moffatt's, back dere where de road forks," said Uncle Daniel, under the stimulus of this speech. "I reckon we better go back a piece,—'taint fur, and try dat road. I bin to dee house, but I come along dee Wyvern road dat time. Roads is mighty deceibin', sah, 'specially in dee dark." Back they went accordingly, and, at the point indicated, Uncle Daniel, with much decision, turned to the right this time, and the pair again trudged on in a silence, unbroken except by an occasional, "Do you know where you are *now*?" from Gerald; an injured, "I *always* knows where I is, sah. Yes, dat's Brown's chimbley. Dere's Miller's turkeys roosin' on dee fence," from Uncle Daniel. "We're most dere, sah," he announced at last.

"I'm precious glad to hear it," replied Gerald.

Uncle Daniel stopped. "Dis misery's took me mighty bad. It's gone to my side. I can't hardly git my bref. You ain't got nothin', is you, sah?" he said.

"I have n't got any medicine, if that's what you mean," replied Gerald impatiently. "But I've got some brandy here in my flask."

"Dat'll *do*, sah," said Uncle Daniel, and it did—for a half mile, that is, when he had to have another "swig," declaring "to gracious" that he could n't "stan' up widout it." At last Uncle Daniel debouched into "dee lane."

"Not an English lane by a long shot, as far as I can

make out," thought Gerald, and very soon afterwards Uncle Daniel made a full stop before a small frame cottage, with a verandah in front, and a tottering pale fence that had lost a tooth here and there, and had been whitewashed at some past — long past period.

"*This* the house! Impossible!" said Gerald with asperity, remembering the letters he had received from "Butterworth House."

"'Deed it is, sah! I swear it is, sah! I knows Mr. Butterworth, and dee gem'men dat lives wid him," affirmed Uncle Daniel positively.

Still incredulous, but almost ready by this time to seek refuge in a dog-kennel, *faute de mieux*, Gerald said, "I will soon find out," pushed open the shackling gate, walked up to the front door, and rapped smartly on it with his cane twice, with an interval between to allow of a response. The second time he heard a window sash raised, a shutter flung back, a man's voice in challenge, "Who's that? What do you want?"

Gerald, still incredulous and very uncomfortable, not to say unhappy in consequence, begged pardon, and stated that he was Mr. Mildmay, and would be thankful to know if this were Mr. Butterworth's.

"The devil you are!" exclaimed the big breezy voice. "Hould on! Yis, it is; more's the pity."

Gerald had caught sight, dimly, of a big figure in white at the window, and three other figures, also in white, behind him. "By Jove, it's Butterworth's last catch," he heard one of them say, as the first figure left the window, and was heard approaching. And he caught the response, "Poor devil! Shut that window!" after which they vanished, and the window was brought down with a slam. But the door was almost immediately opened, and Gerald entering, followed by Uncle Daniel, saw that he had been admitted

by a tall, rosy man, who, even in the dim light afforded by the flat kerosene lamp in his hand, seemed to twinkle all over and radiate good nature and jollity from every pore.

"Come in! Come in! Excuse mee extrornary get-up. Mee name's Flandthers," he said, glancing down at a toilet hastily and indifferently compounded of his night and day clothes into a comical *ensemble*. "And me nation's Oireland. I mintion the fact for fear you'll niver be able to guess it. I'm glad to see yee! Come in!"

"I'm very sorry to disturh you," said Gerald. "I wired when I found I had missed a connëction, and had no intention of reaching here at this unearthly hour, in this way."

"Put those things on the table, Scipio Africanus," said Mr. Flanders to Uncle Daniel. "Don't mintion it. It's no matther. But it's toired and frozen yee must be! Come in here." He led the way as he spoke into a dismal little room on the left, and set down the lamp. "This is the drawing-room and the doining-room and the boodwar and the conservatory and the library all in wan," he cheerfully continued, as he seized a poker, and attacked a funereal edifice of a stove, in which a hopeless fire was dying. "And Oi'm thinkin' it'll have to be your bedroom to-noight, or rather to-morrow, for there's not much of the noight left."

"Is there no room prepared for me?" asked Gerald, gazing about him blankly, as he took a seat on a particularly uncomfortable horsehair sofa, the *pièce de résistance* of the apartment in the way of furniture.

"Yee were not expicted for another week, and Butterworth's in Barltimore now, lookin' for three-legged chairs and a bed from a smallpox patient for yee in all the small shops on all the back streets. But never

moind ! We'll go shares widg you, and yee'll not suffer. Yee'd loike somethin' to eat firrust of all now, would n't you ? ”

Gerald could not deny that he was ravenous, and it was evident that he was half-frozen.

“ Pull up to what's lift of the foire and I'll see what I can get yee. It's a pleasure to do annything for a man just from home. That's roight. I'll boil yee an egg and toast yee some bread on the ind of a Yankee bayonet in no time, and if ye'll take my advice, ye'll wash it down in *whiskey*.” Here Mr. Flanders winked and added, “ The whiskey's about the bist thing ye'll foind in this country, I can tell yee, and yee'll take to it loike your mother's milk widout waitin' for an invitation if yee're at all loike your humble servant.”

He bustled off into the next room, and presently reappeared with a bottle, glass, plate, knife and fork, some eatables, and a bundle of kindling wood. Thus armed, he set to work, and, talking briskly all the while with great good-humour, toasted bread and rashers of bacon on a rusty bayonet, boiled an egg in an ex-tomato can, and poured out a generous supply of something which he said “ would bring Mr. Mildmay up standing and had best be taken hot.”

“ My midical man has tould *me* to lave out the wather, but maybe yee'll loike it better so, and whoile yee're takin' it Oi'll make yee up a bed on the sofy,” he added, with a laugh as rich as his brogue.

Gerald made the usual speeches about the trouble he was giving, and thanked him, but Mr. Flanders waved all this aside, and would have no thanks or assistance. While Gerald was chipping his egg under difficulties, he left the room and presently returned with an armful of bedding, saying, “ Oi can *put* yee on the sofy widout the laste trouble in loife, but yee'll have to kape

yerself there — if yee can! It's butthered outside and stuffed full of old door-knobs, it's moi belief, and a shame it is to put a toired man on it. I'd offer yee moi bed, but the fact is it's gone to be minded. Here, fellows, come in. Don't be bashful!" Two other men now entered, and Mr. Flanders, still in his remarkable cassock and top-coat combination costume, called out, "Dressed are yee! My worrud! but Oi know what's brought yee down! Help yerselves, and let me inthrojuce Misther Mildmay to yee. Misther Mildmay, Jarge Wardour and his brother Ben. They could n't wait till marnin' to bid yee welcome. A foire or a funeral is a regular God-send out here, and a man from the ould counthry won't keep overnight, av coorse!"

Mr. Wardour, a quiet, sturdy middle-class Englishman, shook hands with Gerald, and answered Mr. Flanders with, "Nonsense! we heard you down here, and came down to see if we could do anything."

His brother, a delicate-looking lad of about nineteen, followed suit as to salutation, and then dropped into a chair, and fixed his large light-blue eyes with melancholy interest on Gerald. There was a good deal of cheerful talk now, during which Mr. Flanders waxed eloquent, struck many attitudes, and flourished his bayonet extensively, incidentally preparing something for Uncle Daniel, which he took out to him with what he called "a corpse-reviver." Mr. Ben Wardour was despatched for more pillows, when Gerald had finished his supper, and his brother put more coal in the stove and shook down the ashes.

"What is to become of my new relative, Uncle Daniel, to-night?" Gerald asked, when he had described his recent experience, and been given some lively accounts of the people, country, customs "out here," by Mr. Flanders (chiefly), and had gathered that they all dis-

liked and distrusted Mr. Butterworth. He had been interested in all this, and in hearing something of their personal history, but now felt that go to sleep he *must*.

"We had a b'y here, but Wardour here objected to sharin' his wardrobe with him, and he cut yisterday. Our nigger uncle can turrin in here, for to-night, and maybe he'll stop and get breakfast and dinner to-morrow — Oi' ll go settle that. If yee had n't been travelin' now, we'd get out the cards and tache you a game of poker in no time. It's a grand game, and wurruth comin' to America to learn, Oi can tell yee! It's about all anny of us have learned, and we call it 'farmin',' whin there's ladies round and we don't de-soire to be understood. Have another drop, Bin, b'y, and yee'll slape like the dead in Paradise afther it, and niver wake if Saint Payter himself tried to pitchfork yee out fur a bigoted Protestant, which yee are! The best Catholic that iver brathed, though, is the better for good whiskey, and a good Protestant none the warse, is what Oi say, and Oi'd say it to the Holy Father on my knees in confission and niver get so much as an admonition, much less a pinance. Yee'll get the breakfast for us, won't yee, Scipio?"

"My name ain't Scipio. My name's Daniel," objected Uncle Daniel from the hall.

"Well, yee are wan of the roses that smells as swate by inny other name. Ha, ha, ha! But will yee stay and get the breakfast? Till me that, man. Oi'll give yee fifty cents for it."

"I dunno, sah, 'bout dat. I promised Miss Claudia I'd go over *dere* and mend de kitchen-steps. But maybe I kin stay," said Uncle Daniel diplomatically.

"Offer him another shilling. I'm tired of your messes, Flanders," said Mr. Wardour.

"Do yee hear that, Scipio? Now yee'll stay, Oi'll warrant! Won't yee?"

"Yes, sah," said Uncle Daniel, forced to give a direct answer to a plain question, and then added, after the manner of his race, "I'll stay and do it—if I'm alive in dee mornin'."

"Are you really ill?" asked Gerald.

"I bin enjoyin' bad health a long time, sah. I'm mighty po'ly here lately," said Uncle Daniel mournfully.

"I wish *I* enjoyed bad health," said Ben Wardour.

"Come along with yee to bed, all of yee. Here, Scipio! this way. Good-night, Misther Mildmay. Stay! yee'll want a light, maybe," said Mr. Flanders, and dashing into the closet he seized an empty Bass bottle, stuck a candle in it, and set it down on the table, turning his jovial red face toward Gerald with a last, "I hope yee admoire moy tasteful candlestick! 'Twas Noah invinted it when he was given the drink, not being able to touch the wather all thim people was drowned in anny more than me, and havin' no use for the *bottles* afterward. Good-night to yee!—though I'm bettin' on the sofy."

The whole party trooped out and left Gerald to spend a slipping, clutching, feverish, miserable night on the oldest and hardest, the stiffest and narrowest, the most remorseless and uncompromising sofa to be found in a State that abounds in these vindictive survivals of the eighteenth century.

## CHAPTER IV.

“And always through what is, I hear  
The echoes of what might have been.”

— *W. H. Pollock.*

WHEN Gerald opened his eyes next morning, he could not for a moment make out where he was. The light from the shadeless windows half blinded him, for one thing, and the reflection from a heavy snow that had fallen over night lit up a room that seemed to him unrivaled for barren vulgarity. All rooms in which people habitually live have a body and a soul of their own. The body of this one was anything but attractive, with its cheap red and yellow carpet, its bare white walls, its ill-hung doors (paintless about the knobs and eloquent of dirty fingers), its rough pine table and cane-bottomed chairs, its fearful and wonderful chromos in walnut frames, hung as far apart and as near the ceiling as possible, its huge mausoleum of a stove, not even sincerely ugly, which is all that a stove should attempt to be, but tricked out with “high art decorations,” railings, figures, knobs, that made it the abomination of desolation. As to its soul, the room expressed an *âme perdue*. To the chromos were added some thumbled and dirty novels of a dull and detestably equivocal sort that alone constituted an unpardonable sin in this era of plentiful, decent, and delightful literature. Pipes and tobacco, a beer tankard, and several packs of cards adorned the mantle-shelf, together with some photos of ballet-girls and professional beauties, and other pictures of dogs,



horses, and family groups. In one corner was a pair of shoes, very enormous and very muddy, evidently recently kicked off. A discarded paper-collar had been flung down by the stove. A toothbrush and dressing-comb, a pair of dumb-bells, and pot of blacking, boxing gloves, tennis rackets, tennis caps, tennis nets, masculine properties of all kinds, were wildly scattered on window seats, in chairs, on the walls; and over all this was spread a general air of smudginess, dust, disorder, misrule; through all of it a bouquet of stale tobacco smoke made itself clearly perceived, together with other stalenesses as of spirits, and bad dinners, and late suppers, inexpressibly dreary and depressing. Gerald, accustomed all his life to the "ambrosial whiskered flunkey" of great establishments, had supposed that, in Sloane Street and poor Eliza, Fate had done its worst for him in the way of lodging and service; but as he slowly took in the full enormity and meaning of his surroundings, Sloane Street seemed a very heaven in the way of a desirable haven, and Eliza (who had cut off all the tops of her three window-plants to make a farewell bouquet for him the morning he left) appeared another Hebe, an houri, a domestic Peri. "Shades of Giddings, how am I to get dressed? What am I to do with no bath, bath-room, bells, servants, apparatus, or comforts of any kind?" he thought, and going to the door he called for Uncle Daniel with a right good will. The door opposite opened, and Mr. Flanders appeared with a nimbus of red hair and beard surrounding his beaming red face, which he was rubbing with a Turkish towel.

"Ah! Yee're there, are yee?" he cried. "Good-morning to yee, and how's the sofy? Yee'll feel thim door-knobs for a fortnight, but Oi'm glad to see yee can walk upright still. If it's a bath yee're wanting, I'll lend yee my tub, and here's towels luckily, and

soap 'as used by His Hoighness the Prince of Wales when he went to India.' Here, Dan'l! An 'Uncle' is a moighty convaynient thing whin yee're hard up always." So saying he handed out some coarse, brown towels and a cake of yellow soap, and Daniel was despatched with a washing-tub which he duly filled and brought in. "Fetch me out thim dumb-bells, Scipio!" roared Mr. Flanders from afar, "and my boots, and the blackin', and mind yee have batther-cakes for breakfast, Scipio, or there'll be African blood shed this day, sure, in the State of Virginia in spoite of Lincoln and Grant, and the whole of thim fellows. It's batther-cakes or blood, moind! And just ask Misther Mildmay, wid my compliments, if he can lind an unfortunate Oirish gintleman such a thing as a clane handkerchief and a pair of socks, in which to honor his arrival shu'tably."

"I say, Flanders, what are you making all that row about; roaring like the Bull of Bashan down there in that confounded style, when a fellow's trying to get his sleep? Who have you got down there? Can't you send me up a b. and s.?" was now heard from the second floor.

"It's mesilf that's as thurrusty as a loime-kiln this marning, Hargreaves, and allow me to tell yee the brandy's garne! And as for your weskit that Oi'm puttin' arn, Tarm Thumb himself could n't squeeze into it, and it's all garn split down the back this minute! It's not sorry I am, for it never did become me stoile of beauty. Oi'm Doric wid Carinthian capitals loike my poor mother, and green weskits—" Here the door being closed by Uncle Daniel, Gerald caught no more. "'Hargreaves,'" he thought, "I wonder what he is like. Good name. He ought to be a gentleman."

He had some opportunity to discover this for himself very soon, for, having made his toilet under difficul-

ties, he went out into the passage and there encountered the gentleman in question, who advanced and named himself and shook hands.

"An ex-gentleman, I think," thought Gerald after half an hour's talk with him. "Dissipated, I should say. Looks as though he had left his country for his country's good. Curious, the type, the sad glory of the lost estate, the smell of fire about them, and the evil grace — Boulogne, Homburg, Monaco, are full of them. I shall certainly have as little to do with *him* as possible. A rum lot."

Having thus buttoned up the pockets of his sympathies, as it were, Gerald turned away and greeted Mr. Wardour, and saw his brother pass into the parlor in which Uncle Daniel was at work laying the cloth for breakfast.

"Come out here, Ben," called Mr. Wardour. "Come out and get a breath of fresh air!" but his brother, rubbing his hands and shivering, shook his head, saying, —

"There is no lack of air anywhere about this barn, that I can see."

"He will sit hugging that stove all day, poor lad! Good-morning, Flanders," said Mr. Wardour. "How's the 'Oirish contingent of Her Majesty's forces' this morning?"

"Oi'm will, thank yee," replied Mr. Flanders, and seemed to fill the little porch with his cheerful and vigorous personality as he joined them. "Moi word! But we're all splindid to-day, and have turned out the guard in Misther Mildmay's honor. Bin, b'y, yee'd better toi a knot in that long neck of yours, or yee'll be slippin' through that big collar and thim trousers of your brother's, and come to harum! Do mee eyes de-save my powerful brain, or is that Hargreaves playing the illigant gentleman wance more in clane linen, and

riddy to bet, borrow, or stale wid the next wan, as affable as Satan himself, I'll be bound."

Mr. Wardour laughed uproariously at this sally, and Gerald wondered how his companions dressed habitually, if this was their attire for special occasions. Three of them had never had that immaculate neatness and perfection of good taste, which characterizes the dress of an English gentleman, and is summed up when we speak of horses as "well groomed." The fourth had kept his hall-mark, shabby and shaggy as he was, unblackened as to his boots, frayed as to his cuffs, and sporting a shocking neckcloth. He flushed angrily now, and said with a sneer, —

"That *is* good, coming from a man that never has a single garment of his own, good, bad, or indifferent. Do you never get tired of playing the fool, Flanders?"

"As to mee garminits, Oi'm not resparsnible. Oi wear what hivin sends, and ask no quistions as larnig as Oi'm dacint; and all's grist that comes to this mill. And ain't Oi lindin' and givin' roight and left all the time? Yee forget that, my b'y! And woiser men than me have played the fool before now, I can tell yee; Oi'm too modest to be outdoin' Solomon, and improvin' on Adam, not to mintion a gentleman who lost his last dollar only last week, *yee know how*. Give me a loight, somebody, and let me foind swate repose in Nicotina's bosom, from a quarlsome worruld," said the irrepressible Flanders, and, stooping, he picked up a shrapnel shell with which the door was propped wide open, cold as it was. "Oi found this on wan of the battle-fields around here, with the bayonit Oi showed yee last night. Look at it," he resumed, after a few preliminary puffs of his short sweet-brier pipe. "When Oi was in Her Majesty's 87th Foot —"

"Oh! Shut up, Flanders! I can't stand any more of your yarns on an empty stomach," said Mr. Har-

greaves, and at that very moment Uncle Daniel appeared and announced, "Breakfast's ready, gem'men," with such a roll in his voice of pomp and purple state as might have been appropriate had he been summoning them to a feast of Lucullus. In they all went forthwith, and Gerald beheld strange viands, and a table covered with oil-cloth, adorned with stone-china, and further set off with buck-handled knives and forks, thick greenish glass, a tin coffee-pot, and other refinements of cruelty.

With great haste and scant ceremony down dropped each man into his place, while Gerald calmly and languidly took the place assigned him by the hospitable Flanders, who, in the absence of Mr. Butterworth, had taken it upon himself to play host. Involuntarily he looked about him, with a little movement that Mr. Ben Wardour observed.

"He's looking for a *napkin*, Flanders. I had almost forgotten that such things existed. Can't you find him one?" he said.

"Oi can foind the bloated aristocrat a sheet, maybe, and maybe a towel, though they're none too plentiful here, but a napkin's another matter, *quoite*," replied Mr. Flanders. "Why don't yee ask me for a necklace of stars, or a diamond moon, or some of thim little things Oi carry around wid me as a regular thing, in case of accidents?"

"Oh! pray don't trouble!" exclaimed Gerald.

Mr. Hargreaves frowned. All attentions, of which he was not the object, always seemed to him most perversely misapplied and absurdly insisted upon.

"Mr. Mildmay may as well get used to roughing it as the rest of us," he said, and the meal proceeded.

The meat was fried, the bread was yellow with saleratus; hominy and batter-cakes were novelties that Gerald hesitated to accept; so that he breakfasted

chiefly on a slice of rancid bacon and some potatoes in their jackets. Ben Wardour scarcely touched anything. Mr. Hargreaves appropriated the best of everything within his reach, and did not pay the slightest attention to his neighbors, but devoted himself to quietly disposing of what he had selfishly seized. But it was a sight to see Ensign Flanders, late of Her Majesty's 87th Foot, go into action. He served everybody to everything with ease, his long arms reaching from one end of the table to the other, and his talk never seemed to cease for one second, and yet no squire in any shire ever showed himself such a valiant trencherman. Again and again was his plate heaped high, and long after Mr. Wardour's excellent appetite was appeased did he bring his every resource in the way of blarney, entreaty, command, to bear upon Uncle Daniel, who at last revolted, and declined to bake another cake.

"Dere ain't no mo', sah," he said, sententiously, and next moment was privately pressing some upon Gerald.

"If yee tell them Jarge Washingtons, Scipio," exclaimed Mr. Flanders, "yee'll come to a bad ind, let me tell yee. Yee'll not doi in your bed, loike an honest man — desavin' a trustin' innocent that's half starved; and an orphin, beside! Misther Mildmay don't want 'em. Fetch 'em here, and Oi'll bolt six or seven more just to please yee, and keep yee from falin' anxious about me."

Each man left his seat when he had finished, without ceremony, and stood not on the order of his going in the least. Ben Wardour and Mr. Hargreaves got at cards before the table was cleared. The air was insupportable for heat and smoke inside, and Gerald went outside and stood there looking at the tumble-down out-buildings, at the snow heaped high in the inclosure, whose boundaries were marked by the low-spirited,

dirty-white fence; at the country stretching away icily bleak and desolate in all directions. His heart sank within him fathoms deep. Was it for this that he had elaborately exiled himself thousands of miles from his own country? Was this to be his home? Were these to be his companions? In his profound disgust he would very probably have fled from both, and left that tremendous problem, his future life, to be solved in some other way, but for certain excellent reasons. The first was like that of the French mayor, who excused himself for not illuminating his town in honor of a great national victory, on the ground that he had twenty-five reasons for not doing so, the first being that he had no oil. Gerald's money was spent. Then there was nothing and nobody to return to, and the thought of all that he had left was still a far more potent factor in any decision he could be called upon to make than anything else. His wrongs and griefs might goad him further on, but "return? *never!*" was his conclusion. Finally, he reproached himself severely for lack of manliness. "To retreat when the first gun is fired would be fine," he thought. "Have I not often thought that I would like to be stripped to my skin as the athlete is, and pit myself against my neighbor, in the arena of the world? And now that the opportunity has come and every advantage of fortune and position has been taken from me, instead of being filled with courage and heroic energies, I become an animal, and think of bed and board, and am ready to run away! Charles was right when he said that I would find that luxury and idleness knock away our underpinning, and relax or destroy our moral thews and sinews. *No.* Here I am, and here I am going to stay, *coûte que coûte.*"

Here Mr. Flanders and Mr. Wardour came out, got up past recognition almost, in heavy overcoats, and mufflers, and topboots, flourishing spades.

"What do yee think of the British pioneer in the wilds of America? Fancy an ensign in Her Majesty's service and own cousin to the O'Karner Don, actin' the part of a navvy, shovelin' snow, and fadin' pigs, and groomin' harses, and mindin' finces, and cookin', and washin' dishes, and the devil knows what beside! Ah! yee'll be wishing yerself back in Old England before manny hours, that will yee! If my poor mother could set oyes upon me this minute, she'd go arf into a blisid faint, and nivir come to her roight self agin in the worruld! We'd fifteen servants about the place in my poor fawther's lifetime, and it was counted mortal sin for me to lift a spoon to mee own lips before Oi was tin years old. Do yee see this coat, now? Oi draw up the capuchin like this. Yee'd never know me from a holy friar, now, would yee? Oi was bawrun for the Church, and it's a red hat Oi'd have been in by this, if mee family had n't put me into the Army instid," said Mr. Flanders, standing in the attitude of the Colossus of Rhodes, his jolly red face ablaze, his hands on his hips.

"We are going to open up the paths," explained Wardour. "Come on, Terence. Go back, Ben; get out of this draught."

The other two men had appeared, and Mr. Hargreaves said:—

"Going to dig anybody's grave, you fellows? You might give us each one apiece, and bury us alive, actually. It might be an improvement on this. Awful fools you must be to turn out in this weather."

"Yee would n't deprieve us av the honor and the plisure av claning the highway for your majesty's roiyal progress through your dominions, now, would yee?" asked Mr. Flanders.

"Oh, no! If you like to be an ass, you have my permission to behave accordingly," drawled Mr. Hargreaves.



"Oi'm proud to be the humble baste of burden of my lard the king," protested Mr. Flanders, making exaggerated obeisance before him. "Here's my leg. Behold, sire, the humblest and meekest of your sleeves!"

"Have you another spade?" said Gerald, laughing at the comical figure he cut in his capuchin, and on his stating that he had, off Gerald went and got it, and followed them, laughed at in his turn as a dandy and "tenderfoot."

"Yee surprouse me, raly," said Mr. Flanders, seeing with what hearty good will he went to work. "And yee deloight me, as will. That lazy rascal, Hargreaves, will niver stir hand or foot or help annybody to do annything. Oi hate him! His loike Oi never knew for arrant doyd-in-the-wool selfishness. And he's a blackguard to boot. Oi offen regret he was niver in my regiment. It would have been well worruth a commission to have the j'y of kickin' him out!"

"Come, come! Terence. We don't want any quarrels here," said Wardour the sedate.

"Quorruls? quorruls? Who's tarkin of quorruls, Jarge? Oi'm the most paysible man that was iver bawrun, whin Oi'm let alone! A choild can lade *me*!" persisted Mr. Flanders.

The paths cleared, the party proceeded to the stables, the pig pen, the cattle pen. In the first were three sorry animals, of indifferent breed, rough-coated, spiritless. In the second a half-dozen lank, ordinary pigs and their piglings. In the third were nine Alderneys and Jerseys huddled together under an open shed.

"They don't know how to take care of animals in this country," said Mr. Flanders. "Oi was always fawnd of 'em. Oi've nailed up the spaces between the largs in the stable, for fear the harses would get out that way, and made the poor things as comfortable

as Oi could for a sixpence. And Wardour here kapes the pigs so clane they fancies themselves deer, and we 've each helped to put a shid over thim poor bastes that was exposed in the open, let the weather be what it moight. See thim all spakin' to us now wid their eyes, and followin' us round as grateful as the nixt wan. The sinse of 'em is wanderful."

"But are there no farm-laborers in this country? Do you mean to say that we are expected to do all this as a regular thing?" asked Gerald.

"O! there's naygers and to spare, but you've got to catch 'em loike the hare before you can cook 'em; and there's no kapin' 'em; they're up and aff for ivery least trifling thing, and don't know the manin' av worruk. They've got no rispict for their masters ayther. Masters! They don't know what the worrud manes, the lazy, thievin' raskils! Wan of 'em tould me so not long ago. Said he, 'We don't let our own people call themselves master and mistress now we are free, and you English ain't never been, nor ain't never going to be no master of ours.' There's impidence for yee! Thim's the new stamp, fresh from the Government mint, and wanting to be aquils av the whites. They'll never be aquil of mine. But Oi'm aquil to them! Oi've give 'em the stick before now, and showed 'em who was master, and Oi was had up for it, and foined foive dollars for it; and Oi laid it on with interest when Oi came home, and was had up again and paid tin, and laid that on likewise; and next toime it was fifteen, and Oi added that to the rest; and thin yee niver saw a more dacint, useful b'y in all yer days! And he loved me, that b'y did! He was here for six months after that, and did n't want to lave thin. The ould sort, loike old Scipio, is more respectable, but they're chiefly in the ould families, what's lift of 'em."

"A lively outlook, this. How large is the farm, really? Butterworth advertised it as having a thousand acres!" said Gerald. "And from the way he wrote about its being well stocked and amply supplied with agricultural implements, I expected to see a flourishing estate, prize cattle, prize everything, model farm buildings—a kind of practical agricultural college, in full and successful operation."

The two men laughed uproariously. "That's Butterworth all over. He talks about this place as if it was the Quane's Home Farm at Windsor. He speaks of them pigs we've been fadin' as if every wan of them was a poet—his favorite poet. And them cattle, Oi swear! look the other way when he's praisin' their blood and good points, and pokin' them in the ribs. And every wan of them scrubs has won the Derby, accordin' to him. And the very eggs the hens lays is bigger than ostriches'," said Mr. Flanders, much exhilarated.

"The truth is, we can't quite make out Butterworth," said George Wardour. "He seems to have a lot of plans to work out. He says he has n't got them under way yet, and I suppose it will take time, naturally. He's an awful clever fellow, but none too practical, I should say. Still I think we should give him time, and not expect too much. He is hampered to a certain extent by the lack of labor, and he should have a fair trial. I'm very glad you've come. Ben can't do anything, poor fellow! And Hargreaves won't. So there's only been Flanders and myself practically, and when the spring planting comes we shall need all the help we can get."

"Is Butterworth an American?" asked Gerald. "Tell me something about him. I could not make my plans deliberately, and I only judged from what he wrote, after my eye was caught by the advertisement. You

see, it is so confoundedly difficult to get anything to do in England, and the premium for learning farming, 80*l.*, seemed so moderate."

"*Eighty* pound, do yee say?" exclaimed Mr. Flanders, pausing in the act of attacking a dung-heap. "Faith and Oi paid him but twenty-foive, and it stroikes me now and thin, whin Oi'm lyin' awake at noight, that it comes dear, for farkin' manure as Oi'm doin' this minute, and playin' ostler, and stable b'y, and gard'ner and footman, and all the rest of it! Oi've known wages paid for less before now."

"And Ben and I paid but forty pounds apiece; not a shilling more or less. It's very curious, really, that. You are quite sure, Flanders, that you only gave 25*l.*?" said George Wardour, and it showed the impression Gerald had made on both men, that his word was not called in question by either.

"If I did n't believe yee to be a man of your worrud, Jarge, I'd not believe yee paid nearly double my premium! Sure Oi am that Oi'm right. Oi'd not have had that, but mee sister Nora sold her grandmother Lady Fitz Awsborn's necklace, like the trump she is, to get it for me; and give it to me wid a smoilin' face, too, and thanked me for lettin' her have the pleasure. And not the firrust time she's had the pleasure either, in consequence of me misfortunes and hard luck all round, poor girrul! O, the old farx! The old farx! To be gettin' his chickens at his own price, in a foreign market, and sittin' down in his own chimney corner to do the plucking with none to meddle! It's not yesterday nor the day before that Butterworth filed his teeth and whet his tongue! It's moi belief it's a little game, and we're sold to the Ishmaelites, and if Oi foind out he's been buyin' and sellin' *me*, Oi'll make him pay for it in his own clar't and broken bones, Oi can tell ye! Oi'll break every

bone in his miserable little body! He says he was a soldier in the Federal army. But Oi notice he never keeps step in walkin', and then the figger of him!" Here the gallant ex-lieutenant struck an attitude, his favorite Colossus one, and threw out his chest, and ran his hands through his hair, as if to show what a soldier could be if he were Terence Flanders, for instance. And then he laughed like a giant in a fairy tale, with "Ho! Ho's!" and "Ha! Ha's!" and, using his pitchfork as a musket, cried, "Fall in there!" and with great briskness and much soldierly precision proceeded to treat them to the manual of arms, and discourse with all his own liveliness of military matters.

"But what of Butterworth?" asked Gerald of Wardour when Mr. Flanders had said his valuable say, and gone to work again.

"Well, really, I can't say that I know much about him. As Flanders says, he gives out that he was a soldier, and settled here after the war; and I have heard that he bought this farm for the taxes due. A great many places, it seems, were sold for taxes just then in Virginia; the people who owned them could n't pay up, you see, poor devils! When the army was disbanded, Butterworth says he stopped on here and took to farming."

"Is he a good farmer? Does this place represent his skill and efforts in that line?" asked Gerald.

"Partly only, I believe. He has a place in Albemarle. I'm promised the management of it in a year," said Mr. Wardour. "And Ben is to have another later."

"Do you know what Mr. Hargreaves paid Butterworth?" asked Gerald of George Wardour as they were returning to the house, the Flanders striding ahead.

"No. But I'll ask him. I can't understand why

we should all be paying different premiums. And board, now. Excuse me asking. But what is your agreement there? Not that I agree with Terence, that it is a game of Butterworth's. It does n't do to jump at conclusions like that, does it, now?" said Wardour.

"Hardly. Conclusions have a way of jumping, too, sometimes, and one misses the mark altogether," replied Gerald. "I don't mind telling you that I am to pay thirty dollars a month board."

"And I am asked twenty-five."

"Really! See here. I don't altogether like the look of this thing. Suppose we look into it? I was promised the management of a place in Albemarle. The fellow may be gulling us all. And why should he be living in this miserable way? Where does our money go? Not into the establishment, certainly. I should fancy he could do the thing more decently than he does on the money we pay him, little as I know of America," said Gerald.

"Everything comes expensive over here — very. You'd be surprised," said Mr. Wardour. "And he tells me he is opening up fresh ventures, new farms, so that we may each be placed in charge independently, and eventually buy of him and own the land. Don't you see?"

"I can't say I do. But I hope I shall, I'm sure," replied Gerald, rather ruefully. "Very likely it is all right; but I think it would be a good plan to look into it. And say nothing about it to the others," said Gerald, who had made up his mind that Wardour was "the most decent of the lot."

"Done," agreed Mr. Wardour, and looked squarely and honestly at his new ally, out of a pair of small, pig-like eyes.

"Yee're talkin' of Butterworth, Oi'll be bound!"

said Mr. Flanders, turning round. "Oi'll lay yee a dozen to one he's a saint, or twenty to one he's a raskil, whichever yee please. What do yee say to it, eh?"

"I'm not a betting man," said Gerald. "And time will show, beside."

"Terence, can't we get that stray cuffy to go into Wyvvern and get that cough mixture made up again for Ben? He coughed all night nearly, and Hargreaves complained of being kept awake by him," said Wardour.

"If you are sending in — can you tell me how to get my mare out, and my luggage?" added Gerald.

They had walked into the house, as they spoke, through the icy passageway and into the little parlor, where they encountered a rush of suffocatingly hot air, and found Mr. Hargreaves and Ben Wardour still at cards.

"Oi'll get the dinner and send Scipio for the medicine for Ben," agreed Flanders. "Ben, lad, you should change your medical man. Yee're gettin' no better fast; that Oi can see. Will Oi send the little bottle or the big wan?"

"The bigger the better. His infernal cough nearly drove me mad last night," growled Hargreaves.

"Oh, you be —— for a selfish hound!" exclaimed Flanders, flushing as he faced Hargreaves for a moment, and then proceeded to hang up his greatcoat.

"Help yourself first," said Mr. Hargreaves coolly. "I'm in no hurry."

"Yee need n't be! Yee'll git there safe enough!" retorted the Irishman.

"It's a great deal worse for me than for you, I'm sure," said Ben Wardour peevishly.

"Terence, what of Mr. Mildmay's things?" put in George Wardour.

"Give me *wan* minute, will yee?" said Mr. Flanders, recovering his goodhumor.

"All right, old fellow. It's too bad to be putting you into the kitchen like this all the time. You must let me help, mind," said Wardour.

"Oi'll none of yee! Not Oi. Yee can take yer-self off to the station and bring the mare, whoile Oi look to mee pans and pots mesilf. Oi've a dish in my head that'll surprise yee! And Oi've had the soup on this foive hours at the back of the foire, where it could only smoile. But yee'll arl laugh whin yee taste it, Oi'll warrant."

"Thanks, but I can't think of letting you run my errands," said Gerald to Wardour. At this moment a great rolling of wheels and crunching of snow was heard outside. "'Tis Butter! little faded flower!" sang Flanders, and he was right. Mr. Butterworth had arrived, and with him was come a van full of furniture, Gerald's luggage in a cart, Gerald's mare, on whose back a little darkey was sticking like a fly, in spite of much prancing and caracoling and rearing on the part of the spirited beast. All the men turned out *en masse* to meet the sensation; indolence and *ennui* and a country-life giving a keen relish to everything that happens, and everything that is even likely to happen.

"How are yee, Butterworth?" queried Mr. Flanders from afar. "Did yee bring the spices and the tapioca, and the anchovy paste? There's a new fish in the tank now — an eighty-pounder."

Mr. Butterworth, who was getting out of the carriage, shot a quick glance at his interlocutor. He then advanced and shook hands with Gerald, regretted that he had not been at home to receive him. "A pretty rough reception for you. I hope they have done what they could for you. I was getting some



comforts for you in Baltimore. We'll soon make you at home. A good passage, no doubt?" he said, and then, when Gerald had briefly replied, began giving orders to the cart-men. He pulled out of his pockets various packages which he gave to the men. There were others that he got out of the carriage.

"Hurrah! Horroo! I'll help yee with thim!" cried the Flanders when he saw a couple of demijohns appear.

"There's your tobacco, Wardour. And here's some fruit for Ben," said Mr. Butterworth; and Gerald, looking on, thought "He seems very kind." The furniture under his supervision was brought into the house, and it was Butterworth himself who saw it put into place in Gerald's room, and sent the servants skurrying about lighting a fire, bringing in Gerald's luggage, making him, as he had said, "comfortable."

Gerald felt ashamed of his suspicions as he looked and listened, and begged him not to take so much trouble. Everybody seemed suddenly to have been put into a good humor. Uncle Daniel got a very fair dinner, and there were some additions from the Baltimore markets that appeared to be highly relished by the besieged. "Not a bad fellow" was Gerald's verdict on Mr. Butterworth when the evening was over and he retired to his room and a bed very yellow, very creaky, very cheap, and redolent of varnish, but a vast improvement upon the sofa of the night before. Mr. Butterworth had scented distrust, dissatisfaction, had voluntarily and immediately tackled the premium question, and had explained that he was to be taught to manage a "grazing farm," which required more capital to begin with, but was also more profitable.

## CHAPTER V.

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

— *Shelley.*

GERALD was wakened next morning by a tremendous tattooing and drumming on the frail door of his shed-like, bare, sloping-roofed little room. "I'll put a bolt on that door, first thing," he thought, and then gave permission to the disturber of his peace to enter. He had half suspected who it was, and was not surprised to see Flanders, his head barely escaping the ceiling, his huge form arrayed in red and white pajamas, his head nimbused with its erect, flaming bush of hair, his voice jocund as chanticleer, and in his hands one of Gerald's boots and a blacking-brush, which he was vigorously using with a dexterity eloquent of long practice.

"Here yee are! Good-morning to yee," he cried. "Here's a new country for yee, and illigance and luxury! Think of havin' yer boots blacked by a loo-tinnent in Her Majesty's Foot, and the descindint of three separate and distinct loines of Oirish kings."

"Oh, I say! Stop that! What are you about? Where's that black fellow? Is it time to get up? Can I have a bath?" asked Gerald comprehensively.

"Is it a bath yee're wantin' *every* day! Julius Caesar crarsin' the Rubican! How're yee to get it? Tell me that? It's that Hargreaves's day for the wan tub. And the wather's all frozen up toight as marble in the well. And don't yee be countin' on black

fellows, or white fellows, or carper-colored fellows, or any other sort of a fellow except Misther Mildmay, out here, unless yee want to 'get left' as they say over here. Never moind about the boots. Don't let that trouble yee! You'll have the pleasure of shoin-in' 'em up yourself avery marnin' av the worruld. Oi'm just lettin' yee down aisy into the well. Yee'll be wet enough, I can promise yee that, before yee get to the bottom, and devil a hand to harl yee out again. Oh! yee'll foind out what 'kapin' bach' in Virginia manes before yee're done wid it. Look at me! Yee are surpraised, Oi can see yee are, to find a man av my rank and stoyle out in America, and so manially imployed. Ain't yee, now? And smarl wonder, when yee consider what Oi've been, and been brart up to expect," said the Flanders, seating himself on the foot of the bed.

"I am too much surprised to find myself here, to tell the truth, to be particularly astonished at anything," replied Gerald. "Do you really mean to say that there is no water to be had? It does n't matter about the tub. I've brought an india-rubber one with me that I can put together in a trice."

"Scipio is garn, though Oi begged him to stay, by all the aparstles and prarphets. And there's wather enough to make up a batch of biscuits, if the fellow that makes 'em does n't go warshin' his hands firrust. A *barth* yee'll not get this day, Oi can tell yee. But don't let *wather* prey upon your moind when there's two demijarhns of the spirituous in the house not yet broached. Oi'll make yee an 'oye-opener' that'll make yee bless the day that whiskey was bawrun into a worruld of wather and woe! Fartunately Oi've got a lemon and Angostura Bitthers, and the natest turrun av the wrist in the mixin' yee ever sorr! Vinigar and oil would n't know themselves from wan another,

after Oi 'd handled 'em two minutes. It's arl in the wrist, belave me," said Flanders, cocking his head on one side, and looking eagerly at Gerald, with an eye full of heartfelt praise and generous purpose.

"Thank you, but I don't drink at this hour in the morning," said Gerald, and wished that the lock had already been put on the door.

"*This* hour in the day! Do yee mane to say there's an hour in the twinty-four, or a minute av them arl, or a second of thim minutes, in which, the year round, yee would n't be guilty of martal sin to refuse a cocktail av mee mixin'? Let me tell yee, it's absurrud in a woman to tarlk like that, Misther Moildmay. Absurrud! And do yee call yerself a *mahn*? But Oi won't press yee; only yee'll be lucky if yee've got a drop to drink at anny hour a wake from now, if yee're doyin' of thirrust, for thim prejudices ain't shared boy anybody in this house, in the laste."

"It's lucky, then, that Mr. Butterworth brought down a generous supply. He seems a very considerate, kind man—he brought something for everybody, I noticed," said Gerald, feeling that he had been unjust to the man.

"O! if yee want to go to the bow-wows, Butterworth's not the mahn to stop yee. Oi know him. Oi've been wid him two years, which is more than anny of the others can say. One av the men he brart out this toime bolted for California in three days, and niver a worrur on the subject—the Pacific Slope, d' yee see? Husbands and cashiers in this country are doin' it arl the whoile. Oi'd have done that same if Oi'd had a dollar to bless moyself with. Oi troid to get the place of porter on a Pullman goin' West. Oi ain't proud. Oi ain't a soap-boiler! Oi'm an Oirish gentleman, and can afforurd to do annything.

Bless yee! Oi've set toype, and washed bottles at a saloon, and driven a strate car, and, worrust of arl, been assistant to a photographer, and lived in a dark closet wid such smells! My worrurd! thim smells will niver get out av my nose! A Doblin man, grandson av a Barnit, own cousin to a Lard, descendant av three separate and distinct loines av Oirish kings, and an arfficer in Her Majesty's service! Don't it make your hearrut blade to think av it?"

"It certainly is hard on you. What brought you out here, if one may ask?" said Gerald.

"This was how Oi came out in this country. Mee sister Nora's a beauty, and the best and loveliest gurrurl in arl Oirland. And my superior arfficer, a chap of the name of Walters, fell in love wid her, loike arl the rest of the regiment. But Nora would n't look at him. She dispoised the man — regularly dispoised him. So he turned savage, and wan day at the mess-table put a slight on her, by name. Av coorse, Oi flung my glass in his dirty face, wine and arl, and there was a divil of a row! And in shart Oi had to cut the country. But Oi've the satisfaction of knowin' Oi harsewhipped the little baste within an inch of his loife firrust, and it's swater than honey in the honey-comb, both in the doin' and the remem-berin'. Yee'd have done the same, Oi warrant. Wouldn't yee, now? Oi'm the most paysible av min, but Oi've not got buttermilk in mee veins."

"I should certainly have done something about it, though I'm not sure it would have been that. The little beast certainly deserved a thrashing, richly," replied Gerald.

"And he got it, Oi promise yee! He got it, and no mistake wid *that*, C. O. D.! Oi'd have killed him, Oi daresay, for moy O'Shaughnesey blood was up — my mother was an O'Shaughnesey — but he was

a much smarller man than me, and sloighter built, and that saved him. Oi've had proivate letters from the colonel and the fellows backin' me up in what Oi did, since Oi'm over here. But Oi can't go back to Oirland. Oi'm not loike that Hargreaves, though, thank arl the saints in heaven, and arl the sinners on earth that have garn to the makin' av Terence Flanders!"

"You might easily choose a better model, I think, myself," said Gerald. "What do you know of him?"

"He was a blackleg on the turf at home, and has been kicked out av arl his clubs, and went to Canada, and got mixed up in Riel's rebellion, and is n't worruth the powder it would take to blow him to Purgatory! Oi hate him! Oi fale that Oi demane moyself by livin' under the same roof, and sittin' at the same table wid the loike. The most anny arfficer and gentleman should be expicted to do for *him* would be to twist a card around his rascally throat, and see that he swung. Oi'm the most paysible of min—but Oi niver could aboide a sharper, and him a traitor besoide! Wardour's a good sart, though none av the loiveliest, and not wan of *us* at arl. Oi'll cut along now, and get what wather's left in moy jug, if wather yee must have, and Oi'd advise yee as a friend to put a larch on this door, if yee expect to kape anny of these foine things I see loiin' around, for the very furrust black b'y that Butterworth picks up will be up and arf with the whole of thim the minute yee back is turrund. That's a nate, swate thing in chokers yee've got there; if yee don't moind Oi'll troy it on! Oi'll wear it for yee a bit, just to take arf the shoine for yee, if yee loike," said Flanders, and left off nursing his knee, and, getting up off the bed, fell to examining with the most lively interest and curiosity certain of Gerald's effects scattered about the room. He even proceeded to try on the cravat that had taken his fancy

before the glass. He turned round after a good many grimaces, and much arching of his heavy brows, and pulling and patting of his collar, and caressing of his locks, that Gerald might get the effect, with an expression quite irresistible in its simple vanity and limitless *bonhomie*.

"It suits me stoyle — yee can't denoy it! Oi always loiked sprigs on a plain ground. There's no pleasure in wearin' anything of Wardour's. Oi declare, between you and me and the Sphinx, he's got the taste of a *tradesman* in dress, and niver does the fellow get a thing be anny chance that is ralely becomin' to me. Oi've done arl with his things a man could, but yee *can't* loight 'em up, and give 'em the roight look, do what yee will. His neckclarths are scandalous, quoitte scandalous; he gets 'em chape, yee see — carton ones. He's wan for a bargain! He bart a dozen pair av gloves, if yee'll believe me, the last toime he wint to Barltimore, and arl the lift hands av every wan av the pairs was arl milyewed; and him wearin' my number exactly! Oi've neither clarths nor gloves, nor anything of the kind av me own left. Oi don't mind sayin' to yee, *proivately*, Moildmay, moind, that this is a *croisis* in me affairs."

There was a slight glancing suggestiveness about this remark that did not escape Gerald by any means.

He smiled, and said, with some embarrassment, "If you would do me the honor to accept it, I should be glad. I think it does suit you rather."

"Oi shall be deloighted!" said the Flanders, who spoke but the truth, being always ready to accept, or, for that matter, give anything. "Our acquaintance is recent, but Oi'm sure we're going to be friends. Oi sor yee were a good-plucked wan yesterday. Yee remoind me av O'Shea av moy regiment. But Oi'm forgettin' that wather!"

He was really off this time, and Gerald, belated, found that breakfast was in progress when he joined the party in the dining-room. He found them chaffing Mr. Flanders about the new cravat. When he appeared, Flanders, flushed and dignified, was rapidly waxing dangerous (finding himself pushed into a corner by Hargreaves), and was saying, "Oi suppose Oi may be allowed to boy an article of dress for mayself widout arsking *your* permission as larng as it is n't purchased wid your money, Misther Hargreaves," and Wardour's warning to the most peaceable of men, "Terence! shut up!" needed some such addition to make it effectual.

Flanders's dignity, though, being but a sensitive vanity, was immediately appeased, and the sun of his good humor was soon shining as brightly as ever. Mr. Butterworth, too, was in great force, and made himself very agreeable.

Seen by daylight, Gerald thought that gentleman pinched as to features, pasty in complexion, too voluble for his taste, but undeniably entertaining in an inflated, but picturesque fashion. He felt a certain antagonism to some of his propositions. He mildly challenged some of his most dogmatic statements, but was sufficiently impressed by the fluency and versatility of his talk and mental attitude to be quite amazed, when, by way of grace after meat, he got out a knife and proceeded to pare and clean his nails. Still, as he was not looking for a fidus Achates, or a Jonathan to his David, he concluded that Butterworth would "do," if he were as shrewd as he seemed, and knew anything about farming, and could put him in the way of becoming "a successful farmer." He had not lived among farmers in England, nor read the proceedings of the Granger's Conventions in America, and did not suspect, therefore, that there is apparently no such thing in existence. The meal over, he was invited to have a



cigar—a Havanese sylph of a weed, fragrant as the breath of all its kind—and to discuss future plans. There was nothing that Butterworth could do better, or indeed half as well, for he was simply made of plans. In his very cradle he must have been changing the patent, and finish, and material, and furnishings of his billowy resting-place constantly, to say nothing of his parents, and nurse, and doctors, and diet, and all his visible world; and ever since he had shown a truly marvelous facility and ideality in the same direction. It is not too much to say, and is, in fact, doing the gentleman bare justice to say, that in fifteen minutes Butterworth could prepare himself or anybody else, mentally, to live in any quarter of the known globe, in any sort of style or capacity, from a palace to a hut, from a king to a cowherd, with any, all, or no accessories, and a heart for any fate or fortune, so tropical was his imagination, so wide his information.

There was only one thing more remarkable than his capacity for making such plans, and that was his talent for altering them, or abandoning them outright at a moment's notice, without the least sense of loss, or cross, or even disappointment, as far as he was concerned; nor could he understand that the wills of others were not so weather-cock, nor their minds so supple as to be able to live in these card-houses for a few days or months, and fall to tearing off even these roofs to build another before any other shelter was provided against ill fortune, chance, accident. He had lived in them with entire comfort and satisfaction all his life, and never gave a thought to foundations, tornadoes, floods, much less rent, taxes, or the associations that bind with sweet influences many men and all women to their homes, until every nail in them "touches a tender spot."

The universe was the habitat of this curious human

plant, which could flourish anywhere. His was the American genius for large comprehension, adaptation, and invention run mad. A discontented man, a full man, a man with no plans, or unsettled ones, was meat and drink to him, naturally. Stranded at some resort with such an unfortunate, it was the most delightful play of faculty for him to make up the stranger's mind for him, and arrange a destiny that would commend itself as desirable and inevitable. He would settle him as a sugar planter in Louisiana — buy an old-fashioned plantation house embowered in orange trees — give him an unfailing crop, modern machinery for getting his cane converted into lump-sugar without much expense; skilled labor, good health, a devoted wife, and three children, all boys or all girls, whichever he preferred. He would draw diagrams showing the whole estate and the working thereof, calculate the yield of oranges to a tree, the wages of the laborers, the cost of manufacturing and delivering hogsheads in New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Liverpool. For a week he would keep his bar of iron in the fire, and hammer it into giving out some sparks of fiery enthusiasm under his skillful management, while showers of them coruscated about himself and his subject, and filled the air as he worked on, and got in such fine touches as a donkey-cart driven by a venerable benevolent old negro, and heaped high with cane, the three boys (or girls) riding on top out to the fields. He was irresistible to the coldest nature, so deep rooted is our natural aversion to pessimism, our natural inalienable right to happiness under the human constitution and conviction that there is a good time coming, and that we are just about to turn up trumps. And then, having got his subject one mass of clear, glowing heat — and he grudged no time and spared no pains to accomplish this result —

Mr. Butterworth's eye, in reading the morning paper, perhaps, would fall upon a paragraph about Africa, and in a second, in the thrilling of an electric wire, he would take that sugar planter and seat him on a veranda overlooking an extensive and magnificent prospect, including mountains, lakes, tropical fauna and flora, corrals of ostriches, natives all turbans and salaams and glad obedience (at ten cents a day), and fill this cup up to the brim with various liquors. If the ex-planter turned rusty or crusty, and refused to go, he was either ridiculed and rallied as perverse and absurd, or abandoned as a narrow-minded oaf. Doubts were idiotic, objections absurd, dangers were hooted at, difficulties scouted. The plan was perfect, the country Paradise; the only hitch, or fault, or crook lay in the man who could not avail himself of such opportunities. In short, Mr. Butterworth could live anywhere, in any way. He was not a philosopher. He was not a fool. He was not a villain. He was three parts genius to one part—scamp. For it must be confessed that Mr. Butterworth's principles, like his plans, were not adamant, and his practice sometimes—queer.

So now he got out his palette and laid on his colors. He whipped out his note-book and pencil, and while Gerald, cross-legged and comfortable, alert, but not suspicious, puffed and listened and questioned and commented with modesty and gravity, sincerity and simplicity, Mr. Butterworth cut out a plan for him that fitted him to a "T," having taken his measure and made his elastic system contract here, expand there, until Gerald felt himself encased, morally and mentally, in *peau de Suède*, gloved, not girt about, still less pinched, confined, nor dreamed that it was a veritable *peau de chagrin*. He was to learn first the forgè C of the thing, just that he might the better and

more intelligently command from having learned to obey and be "thorough." He was then to be put upon a small estate oozing and sustaining South Downs from every pore, and add acre to acre, flock to flock, sell his mutton for twenty-seven cents a pound net, in the Baltimore and Washington markets, spend his winters in those cities, travel in America, go abroad every three years — marry if he liked.

"But I don't like," said Gerald, this point reached.

"Oh! well, just as you please about that," replied Mr. Butterworth, waving matrimony aside with his hand, as of small moment. "A mere side issue — as indeed, it is. I've not married myself, as you see."

The *système Butterworth* was like what is known in the Parisian restaurants in serving meat as the *Système Simpson* — a huge roast of beef, cooked to a turn, *bien saignant*, and most appetizing, wheeled on a sort of butler's tray, to each guest in turn, that he may help himself to whatever he likes best. It is an English invention, but susceptible of universal application and development.

In this way Gerald's life in Virginia began, and in a week he had dropped into a certain routine of duties and occupations, irksome always, often odious, monotonous, and barren of all interest or charm. In three months he seemed to himself to have been there ten years. At first, too, it seemed a kind of bad joke that he should be to all intents and purposes a farm-laborer, and he felt as if he were playing the rôle of Hodge upon the stage of life, and might pull his forelock, and make his exit as he had made his entrance, suddenly and easily; and finding himself again in his own skin, as it were, look back upon the whole thing, as an absurd episode, in which he had behaved rather creditably on the whole. But after that it grew daily a more and more stern reality for him. The long

strain of brooding misery, in England, the complete disappearance of that lost Atlantis, the world in which he had hitherto lived, had unfitted him to meet difficulties and discouragements that required, not only a brave heart and much courage, but a mainspring of some sort.

His heart was sick within him, to begin with, and there was no healing influence around him — everything to depress him still further. His courage was high, though, for he was a thoroughbred, and if he was miserable he did not show it, or wear his woes on his sleeve for strangers and aliens to peck at. And he did his work as no negro, coolie, or hireling of any sort has ever been known to do it, thoroughly, unremittingly, fiercely, it might almost be said. All the same, he was very sore, homesick for England, and vexed with himself for being so; disgusted with his surroundings, full of resentment against his uncle, and contempt of Lady Muriel, wretched at heart with the bitterness that comes of being bitter. Outwardly he was simply civil, grave, monosyllabic.

As time went on he withdrew more and more into himself, into his room, his books, his thoughts! Caring for Eulinka was the nearest approach to a pleasure that he had, and scouring the country on her, back like a Numidian horseman, his only safety valve when he could no longer bear himself nor his environment.

Transition periods to certain natures are the most trying of the many painful phases of life, and the growing pains that come to us, "stretched on the rack of this rough world," are apt to attack us with great violence then. We "build ourselves more stately mansions," and "leave our low-vaulted past," as the poet bids us do; but meanwhile the soul shivers under alien and stormy skies, shelterless and miserable, until

it finds another home, new duties, fresh interests, and has grown into all the life of that higher plane, the next curve of the spiral staircase, or rather Jacob's ladder, set up from earth to heaven.

Poor Gerald in after years always thought this the most wretched period of his life, and not without reason. Proud, sensitive, fastidious, and, it must be confessed, both undisciplined and selfish (as the favorite of fortune is apt to be when there has been no great grief, or sacrifice, or joy to make and keep his heart humble and tender), it is no wonder that existence, as represented by such surroundings, occupations, and companions, should have seemed a sordid and poignant misery.

Spring came, summer followed. There was some ploughing and sowing and harrowing and reploughing to be done with a half-blind mule, and an exasperatingly stupid negro. Gerald learned to plough, helped to sow, was out in the fields and furrows all day, patching up harness, mending and contriving, goading and encouraging; and coming back to the house covered with red dust, thirsty and spent, he would attend to a round of unpleasant tasks there with an energy and industry that were tacit reproaches to his easy-going companions. Pleasures, in the technical sense, none of them had, but such distractions and amusements as they could contrive or seize he would none of. Hargreaves went often into Wyvvern, where there were families of much refinement and intelligence, a society that might have truthfully been described as good in the best sense of the term—but only to consort with the least reputable of its inhabitants. He rode extensively about the country, indeed was as restless as the sea, did a little horse-trading, and a great deal too much drinking and gambling. Corrupt and corrupting, base and debasing, he formed

a sort of rallying point for all the forces of evil in his own person, and, wherever found, was doing all that he could to ruin himself and his neighbor, and that not *pianissimo*, like the nobleman who preferred to draw his wickedness mild, but *fortissimo*, with as much impetus as he could give a rolling stone on a downward slope.

Flanders, who disliked and distrusted him, was yet misled by him to a certain extent, and was probably saved more by his weakness than his strength from going deeper into the mire. This weakness was lovely woman — the petticoat; and his flirtations, extending over three counties, with a catholic range that embraced all ranks of women, from the barefooted lass at the toll-gate to the ladies of Wyvvern, were yet but so many innocent sentimental scarlatinas that kept him from more dangerous plagues. Every one of several little villages of the store and post-office sort that blurred all the lovely landscape contained for his inflammable heart and imagination some charmer, with whom he could while away a morning or evening, time that could and would have otherwise been worse spent. And each one was to him an houri. “Tarm Moore would celebrate yer preases if he could see yee this minute!” he said to every one of them in turn, seeing her in this or that dress, piano-playing, churning, riding, and what not. “And the Holy Fawther himself would n’t be safe from yee.”

Wardour had but one vice, and that one masqueraded as a virtue. He played the *cornet-à-piston* atrociously. And, as if this were not enough, he got in a terrible piano with no more music in it than if it had been a sideboard, instead, — all wood, jingle, asthma, — out of which he brought sounds that baffle description, sometimes for four hours at a stretch. Poor Gerald, lonely and depressed in his room, with

the doors locked, would hear Wardour "executing Faust," as he called it, and feel not only that murder was being done, but like doing murder; and every now and then, when he had nerved himself to endure and tried to forget, Wardour, with his touch as of sabots, not fingers at all, would come down with a thump on the bare boards of his soul, and send him flinging out of doors in a state of desperation that only musical people can understand. Gerald was musical, had lived in a musical atmosphere on the Continent, had an agreeable, well-cultivated baritone voice, but never mentioned the fact for fear of the consequences, now that he had hanged his harp upon the willows by the waters of Babylon, and had no melody in his heart or life.

Wardour would propose duets, Flanders would expect to have his accompaniments played; he would be expected to entertain them, be entertained by them, and all that he wanted was to be as miserable as he pleased, and enjoy the luxury of woe without spectators, interference, or interruption. This is by no means the lowest depth of wretchedness, as we all know, but it is miserable enough, and Gerald alternately loathed and envied the way in which the other men contrived to get interest, excitement—the equivalents of pleasure—out of bad music, worse tobacco, worst whiskey, cards, jejune jokes that plunged him into despair, a thousand inanities and vulgarities that his soul abhorred. "Do they never get tired of beer, billiards, and blasphemy? And that poor lad dying under their very eyes!" he thought. "This enforced daily, hourly association with men with whom I have nothing in common, no taste, interest, friendship, is insupportable. If I were getting up a purgatory of my own, and had but two deadly enemies on earth, I would make one of them keep a boarding house and the other live in it forever!"



He had no vice; he shrank from society; the thought of a woman made him wince. There was only work for him, and he went at that and stuck to it so desperately that even Wardour, the plodding and industrious, more than once said to him, "I say, Mildmay, you are overdoing the thing tremendously. You are always at it, like mad. Why don't you rest, amuse yourself? I'll teach you the piano if you like, and we can play duets together."

"I *should* burst the boiler if I took to resting and amusing myself," said Gerald, dodging the piano.

"Do you know, I can't make you out at all," said Wardour one day, looking at him curiously for some moments. Nor could he. His was a purely vegetable nature. He required no vent for his milky, juicy properties of character, and was as free from perversities as talents. How could he understand that thunder and lightning are sometimes caught and prisoned in this flesh of ours, and make glooms and flashes beautiful or terrible, generate electric currents and sparks, beneficent or death-dealing? Still he was wise and right.

"We are all vulnerable somewhere: common men in the higher parts; heroes, as was feigned of Achilles, in the lower." Rest, amusement, were precisely what Gerald needed, if not all that he needed. Lacking these, and much beside, he grew daily more morose, sullen, self-absorbed. Hargreaves was cynical and flippant and dissipated, but he was an educated man and had seen the world, could talk entertainingly, and was not necessarily a demoralizing companion; Wardour was not a genius, but, outside of his music, a perfectly bearable one. Flanders, if noisy and trying sometimes to a man in his morbid state, had enough bubbles in his brain, and honest red blood in his veins (to say nothing of his warm Irish heart), to have made

himself welcome as the sun does; and to Ben Wardour he might have given something in the way of kindness, sympathy, that would have done him more good than anything he could have got from them all put together in its reflex action on himself. But Gerald chose to hold aloof from them all as far as possible, and performed the feat of devouring himself at last without remonstrance. In the end, being morbid and melancholy, he became as careless as those about him in many of the very same proprieties and refinements, but none the less held them in contempt, and himself excused, despised them more deeply than ever, indeed, when the long dull winter set in, and brought out all that was most disagreeable and despicable in them, as dullness, when deadly, often does. And then when he had worked himself up into a fine state of heroics, of contempt, indignation, savage uncharitableness — perhaps for this very reason, what happened? It is not pleasant to confess it of the hero of one's tale, but the truth must be told. He came out of his shell one day, played poker fiercely for a week, and lost all his money. Moreover, he did he knew not what, until next day, when Hargreaves came into his room to get a clothes-brush about noon, called him "Mildmay" for the first time, and with much sneering satisfaction informed him that he had been "as drunk as a lord the night before." Here was a position for Gerald the haughty, the irreproachable, the gentlemanly, the proudly contemptuous! He had felt himself going down hill with a rush for some time past, but he had never meant it to come to this. Here was bankruptcy, indeed; nothing left even to despise, unless he should have the honesty to begin in the right place — at home. He was galled and humiliated beyond description when this view of the situation became quite intolerably clear to him; and then, to do him

justice, he did not shirk the issue, but despised himself accordingly, right heartily and most profitably, and began to feel and to show more justice, kindness, consideration in his dealings with his fellow-farmers from that day, conscious that he, too, was compounded of the same clay, and was much too far from being perfect himself to consistently require any great measure of that particularly scarce ingredient in any one else.

"I made a beast of myself last night, and I am very much ashamed of it," he openly confessed to his companions with manly honesty; and to himself he said, "No more of *that*," very sternly; and meant it, too.

## CHAPTER VI.

"A countenance, in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet."

*Wordsworth.*

"I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !" — *Shelley.*

It was but a few days after this that Easter Sunday came that year. And an Englishman, be he good, bad, or but indifferent in things religious, be he in Nova Zembla, or Hayti, Ceylon, or Norway, has a sense of fasts, feasts, holidays, fixed institutions of every kind that he never loses, being himself a fixed institution, so these Englishmen, each in his way, proposed to keep and did keep this day. At Christmas, what had happened by way of celebration had been an unusually good dinner, followed by an eggnog brewed in a soup tureen after an old Virginian receipt, with such success that Flanders had wound up the evening by waltzing with the rocking-chair that Ben Wardour usually occupied. But three of the men had gone to church all the same that morning, and they had all dressed for dinner, as far as their wardrobes permitted, and made a function of it. Respectability could do no less, and an Englishman must be far gone, indeed, in poverty, misery, or vice before he abandons that shield and panoply of his race, or ceases to heed that unwritten clause in the British constitution that reads, "Thou shalt above all things be respectable." It is a trait that slides easily into Pharisaism and Philistinism, at home, but it has done more than anything else, than the flag itself, to preserve Englishmen abroad from

"going to the bad," as they put it, and keep them in their own button-mould. The influence of a silk hat on an Englishman's *morale* cannot be overestimated. In a pot hat, a tennis cap, a jockey cap, a bearskin, a Derby, a felt, a Mexican *sombrero*, a planter's *puggery* or "Panama," he may be, say, do almost anything. But put him in a regulation "shiner," and he is, for the time being, at least, a man to trust. Every virtuous fibre in him, active or dormant, responds to its high demands and powerful associations. Gerald was brushing his "tile" remorsefully, and feeling that he had, indeed, paid dearly for repentance, when Wardour put his head in the door and asked him if he would n't drive over with him to Chalfont Chapel, five miles away.

"I was going," said Hargreaves; "I wanted to see a man there about a sorrel he's got. Hang it! I shall get all splashed in these muddy lanes if I ride."

"All right, take my place, and perhaps Mildmay will lend me his horse," said Wardour, and it was so arranged. The day was a beautiful one, the heavens cloudless, the earth new-born, the drive delightful. Both men talked of "home" all the way, affected by the purity and freshness that pervaded all their environment, so subtle was it. Gerald pulled up in one of the lanes, and, getting out, gathered a couple of wild violets. He offered one to Hargreaves, who shook his head, then pinned them in his own coat.

"It might be an English violet, to look at it," said Gerald; and somehow the little flower was a link between them, as well as between them and the mother country. When they drove on again, Hargreaves became confidential, and told Gerald a good deal about his past life, — a sad story, as the stories of scapegraces are apt to be, when even the ways of good men are often so hard. Gerald, who was not wanting in sym-

pathetic insight, heard in the recital all that Hargreaves did not say, and though he could not like, still less respect his companion, the combined influences of the day, the flower, and his own recent slip on the facile descent, put a "Poor devil!" in his heart that was almost compassion. True compassion can only grow out of perfect comprehension, and is therefore a divine thing, the especial attribute of Him who *knows*. Wardour, galloping in their wake, was surprised at even this approximation to a cordial relation, though, and, coming up with them presently, called out, "There's Westminster for you!" and Gerald, following his forefinger with his eyes, saw a little country chapel set on a knoll of the pleasant country in the heart of the fields, a broad shining river curving in towards it, and then doubling back on itself in a long loop that glittered and rippled away in the sunlight, a thing of life and light. He had not seen it before, and thought little of it then, but was destined long to remember his first glimpse of "old Chalfont," as the Virginians lovingly called it, though its antiquity never made much impression upon him. An Oxford-bred man, born within a league of Battle Abbey, there seemed nothing venerable about the building before him. But the impression of pleasantness and peace deepened when he got up to it. There were some fine trees about it. It was surrounded by a hedge of honeysuckles. The chapel itself was a Georgian product, a small proprietary one, built of stucco, much discolored in many places, and conspicuously lacking in others. It had an ugly little wooden Gothic porch of a later period tacked on in front. Its bell was curiously suspended at the back in a small pent-house structure, reached by a rickety flight of stairs running up on the outside, as Gerald saw when he walked around there, looking for a good place to hitch Eulinka, who objected to having anything what-

ever to do with Mr. Wardour, picked up her feet like a kitten in paper shoes, and sidled along, her pretty head in the air, and ears boxing the compass, even with her bridle-rein in her master's hand. In doing this, Gerald noticed a good many rough-coated and roughly equipped horses tied here and there to the hitching-posts, a few spirited ones with thoroughbred points about them. He also saw that there were a number of buggies arrived and arriving, together with several carriages. Among these he noticed a queer old-fashioned vehicle of a type familiar to him. Swung high on billowy curving springs, it looked for all the world like the old traveling-carriages in which English lords and squires traveled up to town half a century and more ago. A few of them still lurk among the shades of the provinces and behind the mountains of Wales. And as a matter of fact this carriage belonged to that period and country, having been constructed by a famous London firm for a prosperous Virginian planter.

Like all things English, it was built to wear, as its heavy, well-seasoned wheels, well-fitted glass, stout shafts, and even its faded hammer-cloth and cushions attested. Its paint was cracked, its crest nearly effaced, it showed wear and tear and neglect; but it still kept its air of dignity, and its springs still responded well to the demands made upon them, if they did not actually keep in motion when stowed away in the coach-house continuously from Sunday to Sunday, as was probably the case in its extreme youth, to judge from its present elasticity of action.

On the box was a tall old negro, very black as to the skin, very white as to his head, neatly dressed, perfectly erect, and amazingly dignified. As Gerald looked, he perceived that the old carriage was still doing its duty nobly, for it contained two ladies, a gentleman, a youth, and three boys packed in, sardine-

fashion almost. He saw the children's merry faces at the window, he heard the gentleman call out, "Beverly! Can you not manage better than this? What are you stopping here for?" and was much amused by the look of dignified rebuke that was with difficulty turned upon him owing to the stiffly starched voluminous cotton neckcloth, in which Beverly's head was set, as in a box, heard the displeasure in his reply: "Mars Addison! *I'se* a drivin'." The horses were backed and turned, the coach gave up its contents, and subsided, as if sensibly relieved, on its springs, as indeed it was. The group scattered and mingled with other groups. The coachman, having adjusted his hitching-straps, now came round the corner, slow and dignified of gait, ascended the flight of stairs with some help from the ramshackle balustrade, seated himself under the pent-house above, and, seizing a long bell-rope, rang out the last summons to prayers. The bell was of pure metal, and had been the votive offering of a pious "relict," a "weed," as widows were called by the "young bucks" of a long-past day. Its tone was as clear and sweet and pure as ever, and the ringer's head against the blue April sky looked like a gargoye for grotesqueness, protruding from the sloping sky-line, or might have, but for the long arms that swayed backwards and forwards with every stroke of the clapper.

Gerald now joined Wardour and went into church. Hargreaves, having done his jockeying, had disappeared. He found the chapel as queer inside as out, with high windows set far above the heads of the congregation, except for one long one of stained glass in the apse near them, representing the Good Shepherd leading forth his flocks beside "the waters of comfort."

The treatment of the subject was very tender and beautiful, and that congregation was always sure of one good sermon. The window was wide open, too, the day



being warm, and so arranged it afforded another, very much after Gerald's own heart, for it let in a delicious little breeze, and gave a most lovely outlook on the peaceful, cattle-dotted fields beyond, the woods, the river's shining loop, the mountains near and far.

Gerald and Wardour, having come out of their hats (which they had held before their faces *à l'Anglais* for a moment), took their seats, and glanced about them at the congregation, and, if they had exchanged confidences on the subject, they would have agreed, that it was "respectable," orthodox in appearance, and, they might have added, reverent in conduct. Gerald, having done this, took a look outside, and was so fascinated by the view that all during the service his eyes often wandered that way. Except for a curious oaken rood-screen, that shut off the sanctuary as in the Greek church, there was not much else to interest a stranger, except a mural tablet near by, a shield with supporters and arms, and a very long inscription that made Gerald brush up his Latin mentally, and wonder whether he had ever known anything of that very dead tongue, or had only forgotten it, that the virtues of the late "Gulielmus Basil Hyde, Knight," should so puzzle him.

He was still engaged on them when a little commotion arose, and the pew in front filled up with the family party from the old coach which had attracted his notice. It consisted of an old gentleman, an old lady, who slipped quietly up into the corner; a youth, of about sixteen, followed; then three little boys were marched in under the immediate command of a young woman in deep mourning. Gerald watched her idly as she made them seat themselves in a row, first, and then find their hassocks and slip down in a row on them to say their preparatory prayer. The three little figures were so comical about the back and legs that

they made him smile, but before he got the full benefit of their attitudes, and country-cut clothes, they had all struggled up again, after a look at their guardian to see if they might. He watched her find their places in their books and mark them, and felt mildly interested. He observed her long heavy crape veil, and decided that she was a widow, — naturally enough, since only for husbands are such veils worn in England. "But all these children can't be hers; she is too young; perhaps only the little chap sitting next to her," he thought. His eyes traveled down the pew to the youth, whom he thought lanky, freckled, badly dressed; to the old lady, whom he thought handsome; to the elderly man, whom he had heard rebuked as "Mars Addison."

He was still regarding that gentleman, speculating about the party, as one does, — their relationship to each other, and rank in life, when the service began, in which he decorously joined. From time to time his eyes and thoughts reverted to them, afterwards. "I should say they were gentlefolk," he thought. "The old woman looks quite the great lady, the widow's mother, I suppose, and her father — fine, high-bred old face — dreadfully worn — shabby, but extremely neat. Wonder who they are?" When he got tired of looking out of the window, too, and at the congregation, he found himself interested in the slender, black figure sitting so straight and still in front of him, except when her profile was turned towards him for a moment, as she gently regulated her infantry with a half-smile, half-frown. This was not seldom either, for the little boys slipped off the seat as if buttered, and exchanged marbles by way of relieving the tedium of the situation, and once or twice might not have been able to suppress their giggles when one dropped, with a book or two, on the floor, but for her warning glance, and a

small hand, in well-fitting, neatly mended gloves, laid gently on the culprit. He thought it a satisfactory profile, too, of the English-Greek type; he saw that the brows were straight, delicately decisive. The mouth was as sweet as love, but there were lines about it. "She cared for that fellow, whoever he was," thought he. It was the face of a woman who had suffered, he told himself. He thought her too pale to be pretty. He noticed that she was at once straight and pliant in figure, — observed that she had a bunch of snowdrops drooping gracefully from her belt. Altogether he got an impression of gentleness, purity, refinement from this *ensemble* that pleased him, — and no doubt of much beside, dimly — as we do the fragrance of violets when lying awake in a dark room at night. The media by which impressions are conveyed from one *être* to another are not understood, and cannot be formulated, but they are as real as they are subtle and mysterious.

Pleasantness and peace seemed to flow in upon Gerald as he sat there looking out on the fields, listening to the birds that filled the air with their song, dropped on the window seat at his very elbow, and waxed so clamorously shrill under the eaves sometimes as to half drown the speaker's voice. A brooding, dreamy satisfaction enveloped him, silken, soothing, halcyon, woven of shining spiritual filaments, so delicate and exquisite that a touch, a breath, might have destroyed them. The service was very bright and hearty, yet he seemed to hear it from a great distance. The sermon, like the face and manner of the clergyman delivering it, bore the stamp of simplicity and sincerity. It had for its text, "Be ye not like to horse and mule, which require to be held with bit and bridle," and bred an honest shame, an honest sense that he had been a beast, indeed, in the eyes of the High and Holy One in one honest gentle-

man's heart. As it progressed he saw "the little chap" curl up in a ball on his neighbor's lap and fall into rosy sleep, without fear or reproach. The collection was announced after this, and one of the other boys in front of him scrambled down briskly and out past the lady guarding the exit, walked up the aisle, got the alms-basin, and proceeded to play churchwarden with an air of profound seriousness that illy accorded with his plump childish legs, his queer bulging little breeches.

Gerald, who liked children, was highly diverted by the sight, and as he came on down the aisle it was most amusing to see the child's eyes, now riveted eagerly on the basin, now darted with keenest interest on the persons contributing and the sums contributed. So great was his interest, indeed, that from time to time he not only stopped and pushed into place the paper, but kept a running account of the stray coins. "Two thirty-three!" Gerald heard him say out loud, when three pews off. In the next pew only a nickel was added to his store. "Two thirty-eight," said the child, with a most comical look of indignation, and on coming down was seized by the lady in black, in whose cheeks the bright, pure blood was now flaming high.

"You *must n't* do that, dear!" Gerald heard her whisper in a tone of suppressed energy.

"All right, I won't," he replied, and, pulling away from her detaining hand, received with a smile, given and returned, a bill from Gerald and another from Wardour, and was again in his place presently, with a back that expressed most eloquently a duty fulfilled. The benediction was given. The congregation scattered; but, once out of doors, lingered and halted after the manner of country congregations the world over.

Outside, Wardour came upon Mr. Hyde, and, accosting him, received a courteous but ceremonious saluta-

tion. He turned away to get the dog-cart, saying to Gerald, following in his wake, "Hargreaves has taken your horse. I'll drive you back," and was walking off, when he suddenly stopped and came back.

The greatness of the little things in this world is probably only equaled by the smallness of its great ones in the next. But all the same it is marvelous to think of the actual weight of the tiniest particle of matter, of a drop of water, a single puff of smoke or vapor, as determining causes in the great convulsions of nature that shake all this little-great planet of ours, and, for all we know, affect whole systems of suns and stars throughout the entire material universe, — the force of all forces. And in the same way a curious thing it is to mark the vital, far-reaching effects of the most apparently trivial and utterly unimportant acts and circumstances upon the lives and destinies of human beings, — a very awful thing always, even when they choose to regard themselves from the most scientific standpoint as a pinch of phosphites in a bucket of water, three parts periwinkle, to one of apsidian ape.

Wardour seemed to be a sturdy Briton with a sudden fancy for a cigarette; he had not smoked for three years. He was really the hinge of an invisible door that shut upon all Gerald's past at that moment with a click, not heard by mortal ears, indeed, but audible enough to superior intelligences, no doubt. And Gerald, who thought he had not moved, and indeed had not done so, as we count movement, except to smile and lift his hat, and shake hands with Mr. Hyde (in whom he recognized the old gentleman of the coach and pew), when presented to him by Wardour, Gerald had been gently, unconsciously propelled into a new path, along which he was to walk to the very end of his life.

Left to themselves by Wardour (his train and

cigarette fired), Gerald and Mr. Hyde fell to talking of pipes, cob and brierwood, meerschaum and chibouque, long and short, Eastern and Western; Gerald speaking of them all with the positive, personal knowledge of a man of the world, Mr. Hyde with the intelligence of the well-informed man, who had yet a strong local prejudice in favor of his own pipe — the pipe of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him, — with no taint of heathenese or novelty about it, known, liked, respected, used, bequeathed, as became a Virginian possession, from generation to generation.

They went on to talk of other things. Mr. Hyde proposed that they should walk about the churchyard, and they did so, stopping now and then before some sunken, lichen-studded, deep-fissured tomb, rapidly being reclaimed by mother earth, like the dust beneath, labeled and eulogized in letters more than half effaced. On several of these Gerald observed his companion's name in connection with a "well-beloved spouse," or "member of His Majesty's Council in His Dominion of Virginia," but it was he who pointed them out to his companion; his attention was not directed to them.

It never occurs to a Virginian to exploit himself or his belongings, and great as his pride of race is — for that very reason, indeed — he never advertises either, but keeps both in the strictest seclusion among the great dignities and decencies of life. He does not wish the old clock on his stairs to strike twelve, except twice in the twenty-four hours, in the natural and due discharge of its duty to his family. He often possesses papers and books, china and miniatures, that would make the mouth of the collector, the bibliophile, the fashionable seeker of *trouvailles*, water long and vainly, but he never exhibits them, rarely mentions them, and is always so mortally opposed to their ministering to the vain curiosity and idle interest of the general public

that not even in his own State, for the most charitable of purposes, can he be induced to send or lend possessions that he regards as purely personal addenda to his family. He used his crest and liveries as long as it suited him to do so, regardless of the democratic disapproval of the period, which frowned upon both ; and has now for the most part laid them aside, regardless of the fact that the very democrats who accounted it little short of a crime "to come of decent people," as St. Patrick puts it, are now manufacturing coats of arms out of whole cloth of the shoddiest stuff in the way of material, and more shreds and patches and colors than Joseph's coat. The attitude of both men was very reserved at first. The proverbial meeting of Greek with Greek is no illustration whatever of the dead-lock and tug when like meets like, as compared with the Englishman of our day and another Englishman removed a couple of centuries ago from the "Sceptred Isle," from which both sprang, and set down between Hampton Roads and the Alleghanies. Of the two the Virginian is infinitely the more insular, self-poised, self-centred, and suspicious of strange peoples, customs, and conventions. He is "*plus royaliste que le roi*," being indeed but the transplanted shoot from the original root that furnished the country gentleman of Pitt's day, crusted with prejudices like his port, and having the body of that wine ; loyal, simple, honorable, if narrow-minded, and incredibly pig-headed on occasion. The original root has had a great many foreign elements grafted into it since then, and it is a question whether the gain in some directions has at all offset the loss in others ; it is notorious that good port is far from being plentiful, and is scandalously adulterated, though there is no lack of absinthe and French brandy.

Certain it is that, shut away behind its mountains,

the Virginian offshoot has kept its type pure—the sound liquor of the conservative Briton, unmixed with anything, unless it be a little democracy introduced without his consent, and too pale and thin seriously to affect the constitution of the churchman and aristocrat. For this very reason, though, the soil of Virginia has never produced an Anglo-maniac, and if there is one thing that a Virginian regards with more suspicion and distrust than another, it is an Englishman—out of England. His credentials, his rank, his manner, his education, his pretensions, are nowhere subjected to such rigid scrutiny and severe criticism, not even in his own country, where the truth about him can always be known; certainly in no other part of America, where Englishmen, like bank-notes, circulate at their face value, unless shown to be impudent forgeries.

So now Mr. Hyde, while perfectly courteous, kept his visor down. Gerald was one of Butterworth's *protégés*. Mr. Hyde had heard of Butterworth's, and known the *protégés*. On his side Gerald was equally cool and equally civil. Each recognized in the other, so far as surface indications could be trusted, a gentleman. They strolled on and on, talking.

"You find yourself, I trust, agreeably placed in Virginia," said the elder to the younger man. "Had it been discovered in Ulysses' day, I am confident it would have put an end to his wanderings by removing all incentive to further enterprise in the way of doubtful ventures."

Now, in saying this, Mr. Hyde no more cared what Gerald thought of Virginia than the sun cares for the minute-gun fired at its setting in military garrisons. He was simply trying to show a civil interest in a stranger.

But Gerald, taken at a disadvantage, hemmed and hawed a little, then said, "I was never more disagree-



ably, unfortunately placed in all my life. It was a great mistake, my coming out here; a wretched mistake."

Mr. Hyde's dark eyes rested kindly on him; never had more fire been quenched in more water than in those grave, calm depths, in which an indomitable pride had been chastened, but not extinguished, by much suffering, and by many mortifications and humiliations, even more galling and unendurable to a man of his stamp.

"To act invariably with infallible wisdom would be the *summum bonum* of earthly felicity, if we could attain to it; but we cannot. So we must be content, if honor and conscience do not condemn us," he said gently. "Besides, at your age, it is still possible to retrieve most mistakes. Whereas at mine —"

He stopped, sighed, threw his hand up in the air with a little quick movement peculiar to him, and walked on. Gerald followed with a flushed face, and by common consent the conversation once more became impersonal; yet the momentary contact had established a relation between them by its swift flash of mutual sympathy.

"It is no easy matter to leave home, kindred, friends," thought the elder man, and "He has had *his* troubles," thought the younger.

"Do you read Crabbe? He is a very favorite author of mine, and when I feel disposed to tilt against windmills I always break a lance with the world over Crabbe," said Mr. Hyde, turning round in the path to accost Gerald, and breaking into a quotation as he did so. "It is a matter of extreme surprise to me that he has not met with the appreciation his talents so richly deserve. How great is our debt to all the poets! How a day, a scene like this, gains from that 'ampler ether, diviner air.'" He stopped as he spoke, and, in

an absent-minded way, put his cane behind him and balanced himself against it, tripod fashion. As it chanced, Crabbe was a favorite author of Gerald, and when Mr. Hyde heard this a little warmth crept into his face, which did duty for color, animation, and into his manner a ray of friendliness. "Ah! you, too, like the honest Parson? Are you a good Tory, then, or the descendant of one," he said, "that you show such acumen?" They were now fairly launched on the ocean of literature, and grew every moment more interested in their talk. Turning back towards the church, the wind struck chill upon them. Mr. Hyde, who had got to an even greater favorite, Euripides, now stopped and put on a coat that he had been carrying. It was not an overcoat. It was fully two inches shorter about the skirts than the one he had on, and refused to button across the chest. It was very faded, and Gerald noticed quite a large patch neatly put on at the elbow; but Mr. Hyde wore it as royally as if it had been a court train of velvet and ermine, stamped with its Bourbon lilies or Napoleonic bees; and he needed no pages to help him carry it off. His air of unconsciousness and dignified simplicity—that of a man who by no possibility could be ridiculous—was evidently not assumed, and his scholarly criticism of "Medea" flowed on uninterruptedly. "Here he is, now," he said, running his hand into the pocket of his outer envelope, and producing a fat little leather-bound volume. "He goes with me everywhere—even to church, though unless I am quite alone, and wholly unobserved, I do not, of course, permit myself the indecorum of reading him in sermon time." He warmed by contact with the little book, and was still talking of it, when a voice was heard hailing him in tones of dignified disapproval. It came from his old factotum of the coach and Belfry.

"Marse Addison, I'se a waitin'," this person said, and there was emphasis on the personal pronoun.

He stood at a little distance, his stiff old knees thrust out plaintively, his lips aggressively, his eyes fixed on his master.

"Very well, Beverly," said Mr. Hyde, separating the syllables of his name, and speaking with dignity. And then he went back to his author.

"Father!" Gerald now heard in clear tones, and, looking up, saw that the lady whom he had noticed in church had joined the old servant, and was trying to attract his companion's attention. But Mr. Hyde was interested and did not heed her.

"I beg your pardon!" Gerald exclaimed finally, catching a fainter "Father!" — "but there is a lady claiming your attention."

"Ah! yes, yes," said Mr. Hyde, moving off. "I beg your pardon, my daughter, for keeping you waiting. Euripides was ever the foe of the fair sex, was he not, Mr. — ah —"

"Mildmay," added Gerald.

"My daughter Claudia," said Mr. Hyde, with his fine Roman simplicity, that gave an effect of "the Empress Claudia," translated into our cheaper speech.

Gerald bowed, and had an embarrassed sense that all the thoughts that had been filling his head behind that back for the last hour had been spoken aloud. And could it be that she was constrained, too? Her acknowledgment of his salutation was graceful, and had the pleasant quality of seeming to be directed to him in particular, and not to anybody and everybody, or nobody, as is so often the case. But there had been a swift look of hidden meaning — grave, inquiring, disapproving, almost — from the large, candid gray eyes that was like the flash-past of a bird, gone before one can take it in. And there was certainly a deepening of the

reserve he had already seen in her face, which had operated as a fine, delicate attraction, when she said : —

“ I am sorry to have been obliged to interrupt you, but my aunt, who is not very strong, and has been fatigued by the long service, is impatient to get home.”

“ I fear I may have been detaining Mr. Hyde,” said Gerald, “ but like myself, he is an admirer of Crabbe, and — ”

But this sentence was never finished, for two reasons. Wardour, bustling around the corner, joined them with many apologies for having been away so long ; it had been necessary to splice a shaft, he said, and thereby avoid “ a nasty accident as like as not.” And Mr. Hyde’s daughter slipped her arm through her father’s with a bow that included and dismissed the other gentlemen and led him away, old Beverly following grumpily in their wake. Mr. Hyde, who had meant to shake hands and make a more elaborate farewell, was not too well pleased to be thus hurried off. It impinged upon his personal rights for one thing. Then the Southerner, like the Spaniard, is of the opinion that “ hurry is the devil,” and he objected on general principles to all precipitation, as at once undignified and offensive. And finally, most serious of all, he had been balked in a hospitable purpose.

“ My dear Claudia, is sister Thomasia really so urgent ? ” he asked. “ I have been very agreeably impressed with Mr. Mildmay, and wished to assure him of a welcome at the Bower.” But to this he got no answer save a soft one, regretting that he had been made uncomfortable. Gerald, following the retreating group with his eyes, was recalled by Wardour’s voice, saying : —

“ Fine figger Miss Hyde has — most graceful.”

“ *Miss* Hyde, did you say ? I thought she was a widow.”

"Oh! with all those weepers about her? — I see — no; they get themselves up like that out here for everybody. She is in mourning for her mother," said Wardour.

"Really," said Gerald laconically, and then with more energy — "You don't mean to say, Wardour, that *that* is the girl that Hargreaves and Flanders were tossing up a sixpence for last night? — a nice gentlemanlike trick it was, to be sure! Are these the Hydes you have all been talking about?"

"Yes — same people. But that was not this girl. It was her sister, Ada, a very different person — not the woman Miss Hyde is at all. I don't know them very well myself. I have heard Hargreaves was engaged to the second daughter at one time, and threw her over, so they say. And now Flanders is amusing himself there — a sort of garrison-hack of a girl, I fancy. Flanders says the other one is very nice, but stiff as buckram. She does n't show when they go there if she can help it. The father is a hospitable old party, I must say. They live in a tumble-down old place near here called 'My Lady's Bower.' It has gone utterly to ruin, but you can see it has been a place in its day. They think a lot of it over *here*. And they hold their heads high, I can tell you; much too high, considering they're as poor as church mice, and don't keep up as much state as many people at home, who are not thought anything of at all. There's my uncle, now. He is a haberdasher in a big way, and has got a place, if you like — one of the prettiest on the Wye — nothing to be compared to it all around here."

"Come, come, Wardour! You must n't be too hard on them. We can't *all* be haberdashers, you know," commented Gerald.

"I'll take you over there next week, if you like,"

said Wardour, who was anything but sensitive, though eminently sensible:

"No, thank you. Mr. Hyde has not called, or asked me there."

"Oh, that's all right! None of that matters over here! Everybody can go where they please, and do what they like, and be welcome. That's what I say. It is no compliment to get into society over here."

"Do you mean that they have made a mistake in receiving you kindly, Wardour? *You* ought to forgive that, if anybody can," said Gerald.

"But you don't want to go where you are no more than any other Tom, Dick, or Harry," grumbled Mr. Wardour illogically. "See here, what's made you so crusty this morning?"

"Humph! The middle-class British ass must be trampled under foot, like the fabled flower, before he can give out his sweetest scent," thought Gerald, with the affinity of caste. "Kicked by a duke, he dies like the swan, singing out his gratitude and admiration. I daresay these Hydes have been only too kind." And then aloud, "Let's be off."

Off they were, and, this ripple of mutual annoyance past, were soon talking of affairs at Butterworth's.

"I am going to cut old Butter and set up for myself," said Wardour; "I'm in treaty for a farm near here now, and I mean to be a grazier. There is money in it, I am sure, properly managed. I have looked at it all around, and laid all my plans, and have got a bit of money from my uncle to put into it. I'd advise you to do the same."

"I shall have to do *something*," said Gerald gloomily, falling back at once into all the fret and fever of his late certainties and uncertainties; "I can pin Butterworth down to nothing. My fortune is always just around the corner, in sight, he insists, but nothing

comes of all his plans and schemes. I think I'll go to Baltimore next week and present a letter I've got. It is my belief that Butterworth is a fraud — that I have been taken in completely."

When next week came, though, poor Gerald was far enough from going anywhere. A drenching and a long ride in wet clothes had brought on that most excruciating malady, inflammatory rheumatism, and for ten weeks afterwards there was not in all the book of contemporary martyrdoms a greater sufferer than this unfortunate Gerald Curzon Liptrap Mildmay.

## CHAPTER VII.

"God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame."

*E. B. Browning.*

PUT between the upper and the nether millstones of suffering, Gerald in this illness learned for the first time the full meaning of one word which, written or spoken, has no weight whatever, but is so much empty breath, or the idle stroke of a pen — *pain* : but experienced, even in its least agonizing form — the physical one, we never forget. Not that his sufferings were physical only. As long as he could do so, his mind was harassed by what we call "thinking," though it is but tossing on a troubled sea like a buoy, only without buoyancy ; a weary, dreary repetition of the same set of ideas and images, over and over again, in a disconnected, fruitless, baffled blindness of vision, and effort to see through the millstone of fate or fortune. The only results achieved are insomnia and general desperation, as he found. No matter what key he fitted into the wards of memory, out came a trooping throng of dusky, bat-like fears, fancies, regrets, facts, until morphine plunged his tired brain and racked body into a blessed gulf of nothingness. All the men at Butterworth's were much concerned about him, to do them justice, in various ways and degrees. Mr. Butterworth sent to Baltimore when he was delirious and got a strait-jacket that was never needed. Hargreaves would go and look at him and say "Poor devil! Do you think he'll pull through?" once or twice a week. Wardour was



constantly in his room, doing all the wrong things with what seemed to Gerald, as he afterwards said, "infernal ingenuity." To begin with, he sat on the patient's feet. His whisper might have been heard a mile off so far as its hissing quality went, yet contrived to be mushy and indistinct for all that, keeping Gerald's attention always strained to catch what he was saying. His shoes creaked loudly. His clothes often smelt of the stable he had just left. He ate onions. Finding Gerald fast asleep, he would take that time of all others to beat up his pillows and ask him how he felt, bending low above him, and shouting the questions anew to his scared and confused consciousness, to "rouse him." Three times a day he brought great plates of coarse eatables and held them above the sick man, generally dropping a spoon, or fork, or knife down upon the prostrate and helpless figure beneath; sometimes the tea or soup; but never did he think to remove a tray, dish, or plate. These he left to give out smells that were as a stench in Gerald's sensitive nostrils, and to attract all the flies. Once, when Gerald fainted, he seized a bottle of *assafœtida* and literally drenched him with it, by way of restoring his consciousness. He brought in Ben Wardour's rocking-chair, put it at the foot of the bed, got in it, and rocked against the post systematically, until the patient's groans put a stop to the performance.

"Send him away! He'll kill me!" cried out poor Gerald to Flanders, in his agony; for he felt a breath, a touch made his very soul wince. He brought lights when the sufferer had been lying in total darkness for hours, and held them in his very face, before his dazed eyes, "to see how his pupils looked." Did he pant for air? Down went all the windows. Did he feel chilly? They were all flung open, and the door beside. Never was there anything more terrible than Wardour in the

capacity of sick-nurse. He said, thought, fully believed that he knew all about it, and had done a great deal of it; in which case he must have been a valuable ally of Dr. Sangrado and rival of Samson, and have slain his thousands. He took charge of this case, and might have easily added to the outward-bound colony — did “book” the patient for another world, as I have shown, by express. But when Gerald began to rave — to fancy that there was a lady sitting on the tester of his bed trying to shoot him — a regiment of Zouaves shut up in his washstand and trying to break out, the doctor sagaciously suggested to Wardour (instigated by Flanders) that, as only one man could be allowed in the room, it would be better for Mr. Wardour to get some rest, and leave Mr. Mildmay to his coadjutor. This was in the third week, and a blessed change it was for one perfectly defenseless creature; a sight, too, to see the huge Irishman make a mouse of himself for quiet movements, a woman for tenderness, patience, devotion, shading his light, muffling every sound, slipping around in his stocking-feet, giving food and medicine so deftly, keeping a hawk’s eye on his patient, beaming in a cheerful silence upon him, or low-voiced command or expostulation. The great, noisy, roistering fellow could not have been more metamorphosed in a fairy tale. He put all his big Irish heart into his work — holding his breath often, the better to catch the least sound from Gerald; alive to the quiver of his eyelash. Meanwhile the news from Butterworth’s was noised abroad, reached “My Lady’s Bower,” reached Wyvvern, and all the country around. Unselfish neighborly kindness, as shown in little offices of every kind, clothes Virginia from the sea to the mountains like the verdure of her fields, and bathes it in a broad sunshine of human fellowship that binds “each to each in natural piety.” It is a kindness genuine, unaffected, unwearied, that bears

and shares all the strain and burden of human life like the great mother of us all, the earth, and makes of all her children and the strangers within her gates one family. This beautiful feature of hers is indeed but the enlargement of the family principle, the growth of the oak from the acorn, the development of that strong Saxon blood-bond which is the germ of all guilds, wards, brotherhoods, societies — of all civilization, in short.

The family in Virginia is the State. It is at once human and divine. It cannot die ; it cannot even err. It is an institution, and goes on from generation to generation, having within itself the power of perennial protoplasmic life and power and virtue.

Individuals here and there, in this or that place, in this or that generation, may do wrong, may live unworthily, act disgracefully, stain the name they bear, but the Family goes on forever. Their names are not theirs : they belong to the Family, and they have merely a life-interest in them as a loan, not a gift from the Family. Others have gone before them, others will come after them, bearing the same name or combination of names to a letter, and all they can claim is the privilege of keeping it bright, or making it brighter — woe to them if they blacken it instead ! Their deeds, when honorable, are not their own, but are part and parcel of that “heritage of heroic example,” which the Virginian values above all else that can be got, given, or gained in all this mortal round. If dishonorable, they are part of a dark, nameless, accursed, and never mentioned out of the family heap, before which the Family stand with veiled faces and bleeding hearts for a moment (but lament for all time) before casting over it the decent pall of the family reputation, and walking away forever, leaving the individual in an unwept, unhonored grave, living or dead. Their lives are not their own. They are regulated, supported, defended,

controlled by the Family, which, within the clearly defined circle which it draws around its own, allows and even encourages the assertion and maintenance of the private rights of the individual, as long as he uses his liberty wisely, but reserves to itself tremendous and unquestioned powers of criticism, judgment, interference, and punishment; and science has never invented anything to equal the pressure of the Family to the square inch, as bad Virginians can abundantly testify. On the other hand, as in all other good governments, it is only the lawless who suffer; and by way of compensation, the Family stands behind every Virginian, like "burly Blue Ridge," a strong, faithful, encompassing, protecting power, assuming his responsibilities, sharing his lot, pleading his cause, fighting his battles, atoning for his guilt, neutralizing his folly, remedying his misfortunes, shielding him from oppression and wrong, — an army with banners, a city of refuge, a rock, and mighty defense; each tribe camping like the Israelites around its own standard, but ready to avenge and defend his brother, and all ready to give, do, dare all for Virginia.

With this great institution Gerald was now to come into contact at one point. If he had been conscious of anything, he might have known that Flanders was superseded for several nights by other gentlemen from the neighborhood, among whom was Mr. Hyde, who was much interested in him, and spoke of him to his uncle, Mr. Addison; to his cousins, the Blunts; to his cousins' cousins, the Egertons.

The house was soon besieged with inquirers and inquiries, bombarded with flowers, books, and fruit. In three weeks, by actual count, seventeen trays were sent to the invalid, according to the custom of the community, on which were displayed such bread and jellies and broths, and "goodies" generally, as did

credit to even the notable housewifery of the *Virginienne*, whose mind runs effctely in these old-fashioned channels, instead of on the necessity of becoming a lawyer or doctor, of voting, bicycling, stubble-tramping, shooting, on cricket, football, the platform, the pulpit.

Small benefit did Gerald get from them, but Wardour and Hargreaves appreciated them very highly — were astonished beyond measure.

“What do they expect to make by it?” demanded the latter, his mouth full of a “tipsy squire,” and his eye on an almond cream. “By George! We ’ll give him smallpox, if he gets over this, rather than get no more!”

Ben Wardour’s prominent pale-blue eyes took on a more mournful expression than ever, as he looked on and listened, and thought, “Oh! to be *well*! He will recover; but I never shall. And who will really care in all this selfish, disgusting world?”

When Gerald justified this prediction, and, the tide turning, was pronounced out of danger, he might, had he so chosen, have spent the next twelve months convalescing in all the homes thrown open to him in the county.

And for all it is a selfish world, Flanders had tears of joy in his eyes when the doctor told him that it was “all right now;” all Butterworth’s rejoiced, and the countryside was very glad. “As soon as he can bear removal, bring him over to the ‘Bower,’” charged Mr. Hyde. “It will give us sincere pleasure to do all in our power to insure his restoration to health, and I think we are favorably situated in some respects to promote that end. I shall of course write him more particularly on the subject; but shall trust to you to prepare his mind to accede to my wishes.”

“Oi’ll have him up and arff the first minute paws-

sible, and out of that stuffy, beastly little shed-room, ye may be sure! Ye can't swing a cat in it, though it would kill one, if it had noinety loives, instid of noine. And Oi thank ye for the invoite very much. It will be the making of him, Oi know," replied Flanders.

A few days later, a note came to say that Mr. Hyde would be "very sensible of the honor if Mr. Mildmay would frankly regard 'My Lady's Bower' in the light of his own home until his health should be fully reëstablished, and for as long a time afterwards as he might find it agreeable to give Mr. Hyde the pleasure of his company. Also, that Mr. Hyde begged to be allowed to send his carriage for Mr. Mildmay, when he should feel equal to the exertion of removing from his present situation." Accordingly, on the afternoon of the day fixed upon, Flanders took Gerald out of bed very much as if he had been a magnified baby, gave him his bath and dressed him, and tied his arm up in a sling, saying cheerily:—

"Don't listen to a worrurd Wardour says. Ye'll get back the use of it, my boy! Did ye hear him tellin' Mr. Hyde that his careful nursin' at the firrust it was that had saved ye? Here! Hold on! Ye look ready to faint! It's brandy that'll save ye now. Take this."

"Hello! You are all right," said Hargreaves carelessly, lounging into Flanders's room a little later and seeing him sitting there. While waiting for the carriage, Gerald walked about a little on Flanders's arm, feeling that lightness about the heels and sense of being half disembodied that a serious illness leaves; also the mental clearness, tranquility, and sense of purification that suffering bequeaths, in parting for a time from her earth-born fellow.

"Yes, I'm all right, if only I were not so confound-

edly weak," said Gerald. "You have all been *very* kind, and how I am ever to repay Flanders, here, *I* don't know."

"And do ye suppose that Oi'm going to fall ill of a fayver to get repaid for nothin' — nothin' at arl? No, thank ye. What is a hulkin' navvy loike me for, if it is n't to lind a hand when help's wanted? Ye can help me, too, this minute," said Flanders, who had been whistling and singing alternately, "Belave me, that all those endearin' young charrums," as he counted in his wash. "H'what's *this* name? Megargey?" (picking up a collar.) "Oi've racked mee moind and Oi can't remimber knowin' or matin' any man av that name. It must be belongin' to somebody else — some of 'the quality' that the black ould washer-lady tells me she washes for. Here's my list."

The only careful, methodical, or commercial habit that Flanders had was exemplified in this list, about which he was most particular; but he was not prepared for the effect it produced on Gerald, when he put it in his hand. Indeed he was almost as much alarmed as annoyed when the invalid went off into a violent fit of laughter that was half hysterical, he was so feeble.

"H'what's the matter? H'what's the matter wid yee? What's the joke? H'what are yee kapin' it up for loike this?" he demanded several times, but the tears were running down Gerald's cheeks, and he was too convulsed to answer.

"Look at it! Look at his list!" he got out finally, and waxed hysterical again, while Hargreaves glanced down the column, which ran as follows:—

Buck waistcoats 2. (O'Brien and Miller.)

Shirts 7. (Mildmay 2; Hargreaves 1; Wardour 4.)

Nights's 3. (1 Bellamy; 1 Williams; 1 Wardour.)

Handkerchiefs 9. 1 Norris (W. J.); 2 O'Shaughnessy (M.); 1 O'Shaughnessy (L. D.); 5 Wardour (Ben.).

Socks, 8 pr. 2 odd, blue borders, Carnochan ; 1 pr. Dalrymple (S. O.) ; 3 pr. red tops, silk, Bouverie ; 2 pr. Mildmay ; 1 Wardour.

Collars 10. 2 "Gladstones," Megargey ; 4 "Beaconsfields," Dunbar (W. H. F.) ; 3 "Byrons," Wardour ; 1 Pillinghast, print-dots.

There was more of the same sort, of course.

"Give me my list," cried Flanders, snatching it away.

"Your list, indeed! Your name is n't mentioned in it from beginning to end," said Hargreaves, with lazy scorn.

"O! It's that, is it, amuses ye?" replied Flanders, his face beaming with fun. "There's better uses for a name loike moine thin tackin' it on to such stuff, Oi can tell ye! Though it is n't like that ojus O'Shaughnessy, that spreads arl over the track; a sign-board's nothin' to it. It's most annoyin'. Oi'm always bein' asked about it by the ladies. They notice them little things. But it don't matter whose the clothes are; *it's the man that wears 'em*, that gives 'em all their worruth. Thim waistcoats on O'Brien, now, made a perfect mummer av him, Oi give ye my worrurd. And they become me beyond everything, ye'll grant, ef there's any honesty left in ye! By Jarge! Oi've got it! Megargey? To be sure! He was stationed at Gibrarltar whin Oi touched there wanst. Oi wonder Oi forgot him, for Oi doined wid him twice — red-faced man, wid a hare lip. Well, Oi'm glad Oi remembered ye, Megargey (taking up the collar), Oi loike to know my things — not but what ye'd fit as well by any other name, in spoite of what they've been sayin'. There's the carge. Shall Oi go wid ye, Mildmay?"

Declining this offer, Gerald was escorted outside by both men



"You'll enjoy yourself. The people around here are poor, and slow isn't the name for them. I feel ready to cut my throat, or theirs, sometimes, I am so bored by them. But they are gentlefolk. If you get bored you can make love to the fair Ada. I killed a good deal of time that way myself when I first came out — she'd flirt in her coffin with the undertaker that came to screw her down, that girl would. But I'd advise you to mind what you're about with Miss Hyde, and look well to your p's and q's. She's no friend of mine; the fact is —"

Hargreaves was dawdling down the steps in his usual aimless way as he spoke, and now brought up against Uncle Beverly, very erect, and not too amiable, acting under protest, evidently.

"My master sends his compliments, sah, and he could n't come hisself. *I'se* been sent for you," he said.

"I'll be back in a fortnight. Look after Eulinka, Flanders, won't you? Thanks — thanks. Good-by!" said Gerald, ignoring Hargreaves' and his annoying comments on the people whose hospitality he was about to accept. Uncle Beverly stiffly mounted the box.

Gerald spread himself and his effects liberally over the comfortable, roomy old coach, like the privileged invalid that he was, and with a bounce of the gallant old springs, a lurch as of waves, he was off into dream-land.

It seemed that, as the old carriage, the old horses, the old coachman went dozing and jogging along mile after mile through the beautiful country, the late afternoon sunshine idealizing the teeming luxuriance of the June landscape with its own poetic touch as of dying youth. Blissful was it in the extreme, after all he had suffered; healing, vivifying, inexpressibly delicious to

lie there peacefully against his cushions and breathe in long draughts of air that was atmospheric, indeed, rain-freshened, wind-winnowed, perfumed by a thousand sweet odors beside whiffs from the clover fields, the blackberry bushes running over the dykes, the wild grapes hidden in the thickets, the locusts hanging overhead, the flowers budding and blowing and growing everywhere, each uttering its sweet secret in speech not understood by some people. And to hear the birds pouring out their passionate little hearts, the hum of all the insect life around him, the happy monologue of the brook that ran parallel with the highroad for nearly a mile! To see the gracious curves of the distant meadows, the blue calm of the distant mountains, the millet fields looking like fields of green plush rippled into light and shade by the breeze, the wheat fields brimming high above the hedges, the woods in darkly vivid, effective masses here and there! With every sense sharpened and refined, it was a day and drive to remember and rejoice in forever. It was full of human interest, too — farmers' carts, buggies, wagons, carriages rolled by, and in each he found something to interest him — old couples, young lovers, little children. The meek "mother of twelve" at the toll-gate, with seven of her children clinging to her skirts, appealed to him; the two half-naked, comical little darkies sitting side by side on a log by the roadside eating an onion apiece made him laugh outright and wish for a pencil. He had been at death's door, and had felt the chill and gloom of those august portals. He felt that he had come back to life, to health, to — yes! it must be that he had come back to joy, too! The old carriage turned into a long, leafy lane. The sinking sun sent oblique golden shafts across it, and showed a field of glistening spears on his right, a group of calmly contemptuous, cud-chewing cattle near enough

for him to catch a breath of kine — and Theocritus. At the end of the lane Uncle Beverly opened a gate, and on they went for another mile. Evening came as they dropped into a second, and more secluded, greener, darker lane, with the queen of love and beauty pulsing in a blue infinitude above — the odor of the wild grapes here quite entrancing. Uncle Beverly stopped, opened another gate, and drove into still another lane, most secluded, greenest, darkest of all. Not a long one this, and then a high hedge, a last gate admitting them into what Gerald in England would have called a “paddock,” but really the grounds of the “Bower.” Gerald could dimly discern the long grass unshorn, unkempt; the hens personally conducting their yellow broods, — Cook’s tourists, indeed; the frightened fluffy ducklings struggling through a jungle of weeds; an avenue of melancholy firs and stiff yews; some box-bordered beds. A turn, and the house came whitely into view — an imposing façade, with a Greek portico. The carriage stopped before a terraced, flagged walk, shut in by more yews, and there, awaiting him, was Mr. Hyde.

“I am very glad to see you so far recovered, Mr. Mildmay, and to see you *here*. Welcome to ‘My Lady’s Bower,’ ” said that gentleman, with stately cordiality.

Carriages, a many, had been rolling up to that spot for more than a century, and they had never discharged an unwelcome guest. But the club entertainment of our day was unknown there, the unmeaning invitations to private houses, carelessly given, carelessly accepted. Mr. Hyde’s house was emphatically his castle, and no one was admitted without a certain formal lowering of the portcullis that marked the fact that his hospitality was personal and private. This done, his house was no longer his, but his guest’s, whose happiness, comfort, will, wishes, were from that moment the law of that house.

"I regretted exceedingly that an important matter of business prevented my going over for you, and that my son was not here to represent me. But I trust that Beverly has taken every care of you, and that you are not over-fatigued by the long drive," he said. "Take my arm. Lean on me. Sister Thomasia! Claudia! Ada!" he called, as they walked up toward the house, with reproach in his tones. A guest in a Southern house may be the friend (to begin with) of this or that member of the family, and may have been invited by that member, but he is the *guest* of the entire family. It is made a point of courtesy to inviter and invited alike to receive him cordially in their corporate capacity.

Mr. Mildmay had not been expected at that particular moment, as it chanced. The front door was open, the front windows poured out a flood of welcome light. Claudia was putting a bowl of June roses in his room; Mrs. Blunt was looking up a flask of cologne for his bath; Ada was regarding herself intently in the glass and wondering what impression she would make on him; "Cousin Helen" was casting an experienced eye over the Sally Lunn in the stove; the boys were laying a fire for him and turning somersaults on the rug in front of it by way of relief from their arduous labors; Aunt Hebe (the cook) was frying chicken for him in a cream gravy that would have demoralized an anchorite, and "Pomchus," her grandson, had been that moment despatched to the ice-house to crack a lump for his mint-julep; but for these very reasons there was no one to give him his welcome.

"What! *No one* here!" exclaimed Mr. Hyde, when this shocking defection became evident, and now there was distinct displeasure in his grave tones, as well as surprise.

"Mars Addison, *I'se* here! I'se got the gem'man's things," said Uncle Beverly, with asperity. But Mr.

Hyde had been heard. Out they all poured *en masse* first the ladies, then the servants (in the background) then the boys, sliding down the banisters to save time and eagerly offering to carry Mr. Mildmay's effects up to his room. Last of all, "the little chap" on the doorstep, his round eyes full of childish wonder. Claudia hesitated a moment on the veranda; then, seeing how white and changed Gerald was, with a remorseful pang of compunction at her own want of generosity and hospitality, she ran lightly down the short flight of weather-stained marble steps, and welcomed him with a frankness that was charming in its sunny warmth of feeling and modest reserve of expression.

A white gown, a bunch of roses in her belt, a pair of eloquent gray eyes, a kind tone in a sweet voice, the touch of a slender, supple hand, these Gerald perceived and then there was Mrs. Blunt, there were the others waiting to receive him. So kind were they, so genuinely glad to see him, that it was like getting home instead of arriving a stranger, for joyous stir, and the conviction it carried of his being welcome. Borne up the stairs and into the house on it as by a Gulf stream his own heart warmed.

"You are very good to me," he said, and his look and smile made it an ample acknowledgment.

The hall into which he was guided was one of those through which the Virginian used to boast that he could drive a coach and four. At the period when houses like the "Bower" were being built, no feature was more insisted upon, or indeed added more to the comfort as well as the dignity of the structure. It was now like entering the mouth of a cavern — darkness, save that at one end near the door there was a dim yellow ghostly ghastly space (made visible by a flickering lamp), upon which the shadows were forever encroaching, sifting in it at every pore, leaving the wall now fairly clear even

to the old prints ; the whips, rods, bats, caps hung there, now receding behind the dusky veil. A particularly spindling mahogany table, with a couple of swords crossed above it, was clearest, the lamp being set on it. And opposite was an imposing mahogany sofa, defying you sternly in horsehair to rest *there*. There, however, Gerald dropped down, much exhausted. Everything swam before his eyes.

"I shall play the benevolent despot, with your permission, and carry you off at once to your room," said Mr. Hyde.

"Pontius ! Here !" he called. Pontius appeared, his hair carded out, his white apron buttoned around his throat, and on his tray the Virginian julep of prevention and cure. A handsome negro lad, with recklessness and *diablerie* written all over him was Pontius (so named of Mr. Hyde), and with sparkling eyes and a splendid display of ivories he watched Gerald sip his julep in a shamefaced way, vexed by his weakness, aware that the ladies were looking on, declaring that in a moment he would be "all right." But Mr. Hyde was inexorable, and would hardly allow him to bow his good-nights. With Pontius on one side and Mr. Hyde on the other, Gerald received the kindly salutations and wishes of the ladies, and, leaving them to the shadows, mounted a long, black, winding flight of stairs, and was conveyed into a huge room, that seemed part of the hall he had left for size and gloom, a room also full of great pieces of fine serious old mahogany furniture, barely visible by the light of a bedroom candle. By any light at all, though, the bed would have shown that it belonged to a tired man ; a room in itself it was, with four carved posts for walls, a tester for ceiling, white dimity curtains, steps conducting one into an acre of billowy, bolstered bliss.

"What a delicious old place ! Sleeping Beauty's pal-

ace, enchanted and set in the heart of a wood," thought Gerald. "Who could have expected to find anything like it in America? How still, remote, venerable it seems. I wonder if it will all have crumbled away when daylight comes? I scarcely dare go to sleep in it for fear I shall wake and find myself bent double, gray, toothless — a lean and slippered pantaloon, in a moss-covered ruin. And what kind people. 'My Lady's Bower.' Was that 'my lady,' Sleeping Beauty, in the white gown? She's no beauty — but there is *something* about her — I think it is the eyes. What's that?" The sound came from above clearly as he listened. "Doves," he continued. "It is a sweet, soothing sound; no wonder the poets have so much to say about them. Billing and cooing, I suppose. Well, I've done with *that*, forever. . . . Shade of Rinaldo Rinaldini, is that you in the corner, or Frankenstein? — It was the eyes, decidedly." A yellow glint from one of the bed-posts caught his eye, and he walked that way. A little satin banner was floating there, and lifting the lamp he read with pleasure: —

"Sleep sweetly in this quiet room,  
O thou, whoe'er thou art,  
And let no mournful yesterdays  
Disturb thy peaceful heart.

"Nor let to-morrow scare thy rest  
With dreams of coming ill;  
Thy Maker is thy changeless Friend,  
His love surrounds thee still.

"Forget thyself and all the world,  
Put out each glaring light;  
The stars are watching overhead,  
Sleep sweetly, then, good-night!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

*"Les riens immenses d'un amour naissant."* — *George Sand.*

THE exertion Gerald had made so told upon him that he was obliged (to his intense annoyance) to keep his room for several days. Flanders came over "to look after him" promptly next day, saying "Butterworth's widout ye is like a station after the train's garn out, for arl the worruld, my b'y. The fact is, Oi've got used to ye. And a bad business it is to go pinning yerself to annybody that way. A clear foot's the thing and to kape your friends arl under your own hat, like that confounded Hargreaves. Moy! but ye are in luck here!"

Wardour called one day, and stayed hours, hoping, as he frankly stated, that he might be asked to dinner, which made Gerald fidget not a little. Butterworth came, with a new scheme — poultry — ten incubators hatching a thousand eggs apiece, cocks' plumes sold to the milliners, fowls to the clubs and hotels of five cities, the whole thing to be set in motion when Gerald returned, and a small outlay advisable at once, to which Gerald turned a deaf ear.

Mr. Hyde came, and stayed and talked, listened, enjoyed as much of his guest's society as he deemed prudent. But when Gerald spoke of giving trouble a look of grave surprise met him. Mr. Hyde's high forehead, high nose, high manner seemed all to get more lofty as he said, —

"I earnestly trust that nothing has occurred to give



you such an extraordinary and unfortunate impression as that we could feel it *a trouble* to do anything that could at all increase your comfort or satisfaction ? ”

“ Oh ! no, no ! ” disclaimed Gerald. “ Only shut up like this I must be a care, and I do not like to impose an invalid upon you.”

“ My dear sir, we are all mutually dependent upon each other in this world. Independence so absolute is not to be attained, nor is it, indeed, desirable. Our only concern is that you should suffer, I beg you to believe. But you will soon be downstairs, and are only suffering a temporary relapse from over-fatigue. You must remember how ill you have been. And since it is the will of a paternal Providence that your life should be spared, I trust it may mean a career of increased usefulness.” With this Mr. Hyde bowed and left, thinking, “ I hope nothing has happened, — that he has not been guilty of disingenuous evasions. What *could* have put such an idea in his head ? ”

Aunt Hebe came and “ nussed ” him, and called him “ child,” and “ honey,” to his great amusement ; prattled to him not a little. “ Beverly — dat ’s my husband — he was *born* in de fambly. I come by Miss Lucy, you see, when she got married. We come from King and Queen. She was a Herbert and an heiress. She brought Mass Addison a heap of money, and two properties down in Lower Virginia, and more niggers than you could shake a stick at. Yes, we was *quality* — *both sides*. Ain’t you gwine eat dem waffles ? We didn’t like it up here a bit at first, everything was different, and ’t was so far from de neighbor-  
I certainly did mourn and pine at first, and miss , and so did Miss Lucy, but I done got used to it long ago, and she ’s gone to glory. She was a sweet lady. Miss Claudia favors her mightily ’bout de eyes, but she ain’t dark like her ma,” she would say.

Aunt Hebe was as stout and full of good nature as her spouse was lean and testy. Both of them were all that was good and faithful, and it had not been in the power of the United States to emancipate either from their fealty and allegiance to the "family," nor even in that of the family itself.

"The little chap" strayed in several times, and was sent up twice, and made friends with Gerald, who now learned that his name was Keith McDowell, that he had two gamecocks, five ducks, and a pet squirrel; also "that the way to make just *any* dog follow you is to scratch him under his forelegs — high up — and pat him on the head."

Gerald got his pencils, and made a spirited sketch of Aunt Hebe, doing full justice to her head-handkerchief, — also one of "the little chap," which he carried off downstairs, to be much admired. Shut within their gates securely, and left to his own meditations a good deal, necessarily, Gerald naturally began to speculate about the family, and to reach certain conclusions. Hargreaves had been right, — they were gentlefolk, and they were poor. "Very poor" he thought them and little dreamed how poor. There was a gentle, harmonious decay pervading everything in the room, in which almost nothing had been changed, or removed, and little added, he judged, for fifty years. The chintz-patterned paper, the chintz hangings, the dim old mahogany, were evidently of that period. There was no carpet on the floor (which was spotlessly clean) except one strip of faded Axminster near his bed. The old dragon-topped potpourri jars on the mantel shelf, the silhouettes above it, had evidently been there always. A framed sampler, and a bell-rope in cross-stitch, with the pretty old Chelsea bowl on his bureau represented art and ceramics. When his tray came up he observed some anachronisms. The linen was either

very coarse and new, or very fine and old and all darns. The china was for the most part heavy stoneware, relieved by bits of beautiful old India, Spode, and a milk jug of original Wedgwood. Plated ware, much worn, jostled a sugar basin and hot-water kettle of the florid taste of the Restoration, or a heavy Queen Anne muffin dish, spoon, or fork with the Hyde crest. There was always a fresh rose laid by his plate, a fresh napkin, a simple, but well-cooked meal. He greatly admired a fine old piece of *marqueterie*, a *liqueur* stand in one corner, and next it was a modern washing-stand in the cheapest deal. On his spindling mahogany shaving-stand were some gold-topped bottles, flanked by a rubber dressing-comb, and cheap brush of the most modern. The old and new *régimes* were brought into sharpest contrast, occasionally, even in the pretty old English embroideries and laces above the bed and bureau, and the abundantly supplied, but coarse-textured towels hung over the horse. From the possessions to the possessors was but a step, and, as it chanced, Gerald, for all he was exiled from them, got to know more of them in that week than if he had been in their midst, and in this way: One of the most delightful features, architecturally, about the "Bower" was the portico in the rear. It ran across all that end of the house. It was supported by huge white columns, massive and dignified, running up to the roof. It was tiled, and had a spindling, shackling balustrade about it of the faded green hue of the shutters and all the woodwork of the exterior. From it, a flight of steps led down a couple of terraces, defined by crumbling stone walls, into an old-fashioned garden, where the flowers and herbs that our grandmothers loved and tended ran riot in wildest confusion and profusion, or were overrun by the advance guard which nature is ever pushing forward to reclaim all for her own again

that has been wrested from her. Below this, again, was a small artificial lake and dumb fountain, and beyond that the brow of a steep declivity, from which the eye could revel in an extensive and very beautiful view of the plain far beneath, bounded by a chain of mountains. Even in winter the portico afforded a snug and sheltered walk, and its ever delightful outlook was the soul of the place, attractive at all seasons, a changeful panorama of mists, clouds, storm, and sunshine, moonlight, starlight, of which one never wearied. In summer it was the favorite resort of the family, — much of the business and nearly all of the pleasures of their daily life being transacted there. The windows of Gerald's room overlooked it, and it was in such a peculiar way, from such a height, ~~that~~ no one below had the sense of being observed. At the same time he was taken into the family confidence without feeling himself a Paul Pry, or a flunky gaining his impressions by unwarrantable means and impertinent curiosity of the keyhole stamp. He had dragged to the window, one day, a large invalid chair of a high-backed, baronial pattern, that smacked of the "spacious days" and ways of Elizabeth, and, ensconced in its faded velvet depths, thought merely to get the air and view. But one easily gets enough air — and the loveliest views cannot long claim or fix our attention, so presently Gerald was looking down, himself out of view, upon a group gathered on the porch below, consisting of Claudia, Ada, and three of the boys, all engaged in stemming strawberries to preserve.

When one is at a certain stage of convalescence there is a great charm in vicarious employment, and, though Gerald had a book in his hand (an "Annual" in red morocco, date 1830), he found it much more interesting to assist, unobserved, at the practical work going on below. Two of the boys, seated on the steps, had

aprons of brown holland pinned around their throats, and seemed to be doing their full share of tasting. Ada was stretched out in a rocking-chair, her shoes unbuttoned, her hair in disorder; and it was only after some time had passed that she took a dish and languidly contributed a very small quota to the general heap of prepared fruit. Claudia, in a fresh print gown, was in a low chair, sitting up with her own charming poise of figure, which was not in the least that of the conventional young lady strapped to an invisible backboard, a petrification of fashionable propriety. Claudia was as pliantly erect as the stem of a flower after a refreshing shower. She was energetically plucking berry after berry from a dish heaped high with them, in a cheerful industry that of itself almost cured Gerald, it was so delightfully brisk. A stiffly starched, wide-flaring little Southern sunbonnet, of some blue stuff, was pushed back, or rather had been dragged back by little Keith, who was standing behind her on the rounds of a chair, his arms fast locked about her neck, when Gerald first looked. He saw her, without impatience, pull away from the child, saying, "Don't, boy dear! You choke me, and I can't get on with my work. Are you tired already? Has he stained my collar, Ada? Well, never mind; it will wash. Pull my sleeves up higher, Keith."

She held up her hands as she spoke, down which the red juice was running, saying, "I wonder what the henna is made of that Eastern women dye their fingers with, and if it is as pretty as this. There, there!" as the child gave a jerk to her sleeves that sent them above her elbows, showing her rounded arms that f — "now, dear, you really must go on, — we must let all this fruit spoil." As she spoke she merrily, with one finger, put a couple of red patches on each of his cheeks. "Now you've got two splendid red

apples — beauties!" she said. "I'd have a nibble at them this minute if I were not so busy."

"Is that what Ada puts on her face sometimes, out of a little pot?" said Keith.

"What nonsense! You don't know what you are talking about," said Ada angrily.

"But I do. I saw you!" insisted Keith. "I was under the bed."

"Here, Keith, sit here. Take your plate, and while you boys stem I'll tell you a story to make the time pass," said Claudia.

"That's bully!" said Edmund.

"But I did see her, Claudia," said Keith.

The voices rose clear, distinct, to where Gerald sat.

"Wait one moment, please, until I run down and ask Wyndham to go in town and get some more preserving sugar, and take father his medicine," Claudia said, and, rising hastily, wiped her hands and disappeared indoors. In a few minutes she was back again, and with a smile and a "Now, then," began her story. It proved to be "Picciola," and was told charmingly, Gerald thought. And all the while the supple fingers worked briskly and deftly, the inevitable interruptions were pleasantly met and disposed of, the heap of fruit grew and grew, small thanks to Ada, who only half worked, half listened, and at last fell back upon playing "cats-cradle" *solus*. The contrast between her pretty, but unintelligent and peevish face, and that of Claudia, which got brighter and sweeter every moment as she told her tale of a flower, struck Gerald very much. "She looks a sweet woman," he thought. "And what a voice she has got! Why, it is delicious! It is the voice of a wood nymph. Undine's could not be more so. It has in it the running of brooks, the song of birds, the breeze among the boughs; it coos, it woos, it is as sweet as a siren's. I never heard such

an one. What is she repeating now ? ” He listen for a moment ; “ Shelley’s ‘ Ode to the West Wind,’ ” he said. “ Delightful ! ” In a few moments he was saying, with even greater surprise, “ Latin ! By Jov Horace, and my favorite ode. And that lanky l prompting her without the book.”

As he looked, Mr. Hyde came up the steps and seat himself on the weather-worn old bench that ran along the wall.

“ You look tired, father dear. Would n’t you li a glass of milk ? ” said Claudia, rising, as she spok with a sweet alacrity of willingness in her look a manner that bespoke much affection.

“ Thank you, my daughter,” said Mr. Hyde ; “ a bring Josephus.”

“ One can see that she is awfully fond of her father thought Gerald, and she was, but it must be confess that he was measuring the depth of her affection by t length of her eyelashes, which now struck him as lo and very dark. She was back presently with bot and then whisked into her apron again, and went ba to her work.

“ I will finish the description of the siege of Jer salem, that I was reading you last night, children. is a most sublime commentary on Holy Scripture, most appalling fulfillment of prophecy,” said Mr. Hy presently.

“ Do, father dear. Get father a more comforta chair, Edmund,” said Claudia.

The reading was not so interesting to Gerald, som how, as the recitations, though Mr. Hyde read ve well. He leaned back in his chair, but was still liste ing, and presently he heard a little bustle below as chairs being dragged back. He looked out. It w raining, and Wyndham had returned with his arms ft of packages.

"Oh! you dear boy! You are all wet! Come here, and let me give you one kiss for going, and another for being Wyn," cried Claudia, and rewarded him accordingly, besides beaming approval upon him. "Now run off and change your things at once, and don't tell me that you are not damp, and that you can't possibly catch cold. Here goes my last berry! I'll go and weigh the sugar in the storeroom. Just see how it is coming down. We must all beat a retreat."

This they all did, and so the drop curtain fell on the little scene below and on all beyond. Others were enacted, however, that very day, when the summer shower was over, and on succeeding days.

Gerald would see Mr. Hyde and Mrs. Blunt, for instance, walking there together; and hear them, too. The deference, the courtesy shown her by Mr. Hyde, his grave formality, were met on her side by equal courtesy, but a certain sharpness showed itself. Gerald thought he perceived an acrid quality in all she said and did, that seemed to spring from an embittered heart, rather than annoyance at the views that he expressed, which she combated with a keen cleverness that cut like a razor into his logical masculine premises and deductions. Gerald knew nothing whatever of the subject first under discussion, the character and policy of a Mr. Jefferson, of whom he had never heard, but he could appreciate the ability with which she held a brief for him; her apparent knowledge of public men and political measures extending over a long period; the general cultivation shown by her allusions to contemporary men, measures, events in other countries, notably his own. They spoke with so much interest, as of a current event, that Gerald "wondered what was up in the American Congress," and more than once smiled at Mrs. Blunt's way of putting things.

"Affected by French influences, brother? Not in



the least ; he is American to the core — in some ways the strongest man we have ever produced," she concluded.

"I thought Samson was the strongest man," cried little Keith, from among his toys at their feet.

3 "Sister Thomasia, you know that I have always the greatest respect for your opinions, but I must keep my own convictions. Will you allow me to place your chair out of the draught ?" said Mr. Hyde. And it was at this moment that Gerald noticed Claudia gathering flowers in the garden beyond. He saw her kiss her hand playfully to her father, and very soon she came up the steps.

"You'll have a rose from mother's bush, father dear, won't you ? Aren't my geraniums superb this year ? Look at this one," she said, showing, with pride and pleasure, her bouquet. She laid it down on the bench, and came and perched on the arm of his chair, and pinned a white rose in his buttonhole, and talked to him for some moments. "You see Mr. and Mrs. Copperfield are at home for the season at Twig Lodge," she said, pointing up to a bird's nest in the capital of one of the pillars. If she had looked a little higher she would have seen a head hastily withdrawn ; but it was out again next moment. "Dear little things, are n't they ? The pewit in the wisteria has married again. We know it is the same bird, for Wyn twisted a ring of silver wire around his leg last year, on purpose to mark him, and I have lost all confidence in widowers ! Auntie, it can't be good for your neuralgia to sit out without your shawl. I'll get it." She was off, and back with it in a twinkling, put it around Mrs. Blunt's shoulders gently, and went back to her perch, but had scarcely got there when Aunt Hebe appeared around the corner, saying, —

"Miss Claudia, I done got de eggs."

"Very well, Mammy. Thank you. How many? Ah! six. Father, if you had a pudding that must be made for dinner, and a child to bathe and dress for 'that same,' as the Irish say, and were pressed for time in consequence of the fascinations of your flowers and your father, which duty would you neglect?"

"Neither. Where is Ada?" said Mr. Hyde.

"Oh, never mind; I'll manage both somehow; Ada's head aches to-day, I believe. Come along, young person. Oh! what a face! What an apron!" she replied, and, picking up "the little chap," went indoors.

Next day Gerald again made a pretense (to himself) of reading at the window, but was soon looking out of it instead, and now there was an addition to the *dramatis personæ*. "Cousin Miles is here," was announced by the boys, in loud tones, and Gerald saw them bear out, rather than accompany, a smiling victim for all children — a rosy and clean-shaven, mild-faced, elderly man, with a voice so low that there was no hearing a word he said ten feet off.

"How do you do, Miles? I trust that you are in the enjoyment of your usual health this morning, and that you have no other cause for concern at 'The Briars'? How is your sister? She seemed quite indisposed on Thursday," said Mr. Hyde, advancing to meet him with much politeness.

Cousin Miles was quite inaudible, but equally polite, and it appeared from Mr. Hyde's replies that he was inquiring for Mr. Hyde's health, Mrs. Blunt's neuralgia, "the well-being of my young cousins" (the only phrase that got abroad), the condition of the sick Alderney, the raspberry-bed. Five minutes at least were consumed in these elaborate inquiries; a second less would have been unseemly. Five more were consumed in small talk about different and indifferent matters; and this was a fixed quantity.

"Have you nothing to offer your cousin, after his long ride, by way of grateful refreshment?" said Mr. Hyde, his long shapely hands resting on his knee, his face turned half reprovingly toward Ada.

"Call Claudia. Go, tell Claudia, Edmund," said that lady from her rocking-chair and the depths of a dime novel.

And Claudia was evidently told, for Beverly appeared in a moment with a couple of juleps, and Cousin Miles made an inaudible joke on seeing them that wrung a sour smile from that confirmed Adullamite. Mr. Hyde waxed soberly genial, as he always did at just this stage of their meetings. Both gentlemen eyed their juleps shrewdly, like the connoisseurs they were, made some remark about it, and gravely pledged each other in an invariable toast, namely, "Tom Mason," — a mutual friend, who had been dead for the last thirty years.

"Do you feel inclined to challenge the fickle goddess Fortune to-day, Miles? Ah! you do. Then since you are her votary, you cannot, of course, object to playing blindfolded," said Mr. Hyde, and led the way to the chess-table already set out for them.

At this moment "Cousin Eleanor" appeared on the scene. Mr. Hyde retraced his steps.

"Miles said you would be here, Eleanor, and I am glad to see that you know how to redeem a promise," he said, and stood there uncovered until a dear, gentle old lady, of the kind that seems to bring a benediction upon all persons and places wherever she goes, had made, and received, all her greetings; until he had himself placed for her a chair, and made her a charming bow. He then returned to his game.

Mr. Miles Egerton was Mr. Hyde's nearest neighbor, his kinsman, his lifelong friend. As babies, they had played on a rug together on that very spot, to the

great delight of their respective mothers ; and, indoors or out, regularly twice a week — on Wednesdays and Saturdays — for nearly forty years, with only this change from parlor to porch, and back to the parlor again, they had indulged in exactly three games of chess, besides meeting on all the other days of the week, as a rule. And yet so little had all this close contact rubbed off the fine polish of a breeding ingrained, and not of the veneered variety, that, as Gerald looked, he thought, “ *Bien porté*, like the gentlemen of the Restoration. If their clothes were made to match their manners, they would be in bag-wigs, and short swords, and silken doublets.” Each gentleman bowed courteously to his antagonist, to begin with ; each waited for the other to take his seat, indicating it with a truly Chesterfieldian eloquence of gesture. This settled, each insisted that the other should take the first move. The attack on the queen was conducted on the lines of the Khan of Khiva, who begged Kaufmann not to give battle until his artillery should reach him. And a checkmate was a thing to be delicately deplored by the victor, who, “ by the merest accident,” had, for that day only, won a qualified and doubtful advantage — victory was not breathed, looked even. Meanwhile, the two old ladies were talking of many things, and Claudia got her work-basket. Gerald watched her turning over her spools and silks and bits of lace and ribbon, watched her thread her needle, admired her eyelashes afresh. “ She makes a pretty, womanly picture,” he thought. And Claudia, unconscious of his observation, tackled a great heap of the boys’ stockings with much energy for an hour, then laid them aside, and brought out the vegetables for dinner, saying, “ Mamma is half blind now, Cousin Eleanor, and does not prepare the potatoes or string the beans properly ; and she has so much to do beside ; so I help her, though I have to ‘do good by

stealth, and blush to' — be found out. She is very sensitive on the subject. I stole these from under her dear old black nose while she was making a cake." The other ladies, on hearing this, insisted on helping her, too, so the matter was very speedily and satisfactorily disposed of.

"I have brought over a sitting of turkey eggs, Claudia. But only to exchange for one of ducks, not as a gift," said Miss Egerton presently.

"Very well, cousin," said Claudia. "I'll show you what I have got."

"Where has she gone *now*?" thought Gerald. Already the other members of the party were becoming as lay figures, compared with this figure, though he was not conscious of the fact.

She had not gone far, and she brought out a bureau drawer divided into compartments, filled with raw cotton, in which were eggs labeled and dated, from which she selected a dozen for Miss Egerton.

"Now, cousin, I shall bring my babes and make my boast," she said. "Would n't you be more comfortable with a footstool? No? Prepare to be very envious." With this she disappeared again, and this time came back by way of the garden, taking Gerald by surprise consequently, and causing him involuntarily to draw back again, as with swift grace she rounded the corner and came up the steps smiling, in her hand a covered basket.

"Fifty-seven!" she cried, and, uncovering it, displayed an agitated heap of ducklings.

"Fifty-seven!" cried Claudia; "and each one a shade fluffier and prettier than the other. Think of the dinners we'll have next winter! No! No! dears. Who said anything about *dinners*? No wonder you have got a lump in your throat and can scarcely swallow," she said; and sitting down, she

turned them out in her lap, and crumbling a biscuit fed them from her hand, laughing at the way they ran over her, and away from her, their heads high in the air, their absurd embryo wings spread out as if to fly.

"You are not going before dinner, cousin, surely," she said, collecting them hastily at last, seeing the bows with which the game was ending, and that the Egertons were making a move. But they were, and, after an affectionate parting all round, go they did, and the porch was deserted.

Early next morning, Gerald, revolting against further imprisonment, rose, dressed, and took himself downstairs. So far, well enough, but he had not the *carte du pays*. Where ought one to go next? He found the hall full of interest by daylight. It was cheerful, for both doors were open, and the sun poured in, and the "Bower" was a perfect bird-cage on this fine June morning, with the birds all on the right side of the cage — i. e. the outside. On the walls was the quaintest old paper, representing an English fox chase over and over again, — the inn, the maid fetching out beer to thirsty sportsmen, the dogs trying for the scent, the horses caracoling, the men in pink coats down to their heels. The contents in the way of pictures, furniture, and trophies of one kind or other interested him, too. "Perhaps I ought to go into the parlor," he thought. "I wonder where it is?" Catching sight on the left, through an open door, of a piano, he walked through it, and came upon — Claudia — Claudia, broom in hand, cleaning the room. She had on a housemaid's cap, a housemaid's apron, her gown was caught up, and she was giving her whole mind and energies to her task.

Gerald stopped short, surprised and embarrassed; Claudia stopped short, surprised likewise, and likewise embarrassed. But she did not turn, fly, apologize.

She could not help coloring, but she looked at him quietly, and said with composure, "Good-morning. You will find the room opposite in order, Mr. Mildmay. I am glad to see you down. You will find father there;" and so, with a little inclination of her head, dismissed him and went on with her work.

This dignified Claudia was not at all the girl he had seen for three days past, he felt. As he went, he thought, "What a sensible woman! A *lady*! It must have annoyed her to be taken at a disadvantage in that way. I like to see a woman steady under fire, as well as a man. And no false pride or bogus humility. All the same I wish I had stopped in the hall! It isn't the first time she has used a broom either, I can see. If half the fine ladies in London would follow her example, the doctors would have to find another trade and the chemists would be ruined."

"He behaved very well," thought Claudia. "He did not offer to help me, express any surprise, or commiserate my hard fate. Above all, he did not *stay*; stood not on the order of his going, but *went* at once."

Gerald found the dining-room big and black, like all the other rooms in the house; carpetless, too, save for a strip near the hearth and a mat at the door. But it was very clean, the floor was stained, the hearth was neat, it boasted a beautiful Chippendale sideboard, on which were some pieces of old silver and cut glass. It was lined with books to the ceiling, having formerly been the library. There were a number of leathern armchairs in it, well-worn, but evidently most comfortable, from one of which Mr. Hyde rose and welcomed him heartily, book in hand. A board, Homeric in its proportions, had already been spread, in the shape of a long, brass-clawed mahogany table. Mr. Hyde was still making dignified inquiries about his health, sleep, com-

fort, when the family assembled in response to a loud bell rung, with animus apparently, by Uncle Beverly twice within five minutes. Gerald was presented to "Cousin Helen Wilmot," greeted with a sort of simpering effusiveness by Ada, with stately courtesy by Mrs. Blunt, whom he thought handsomer than ever by morning light—a rose, that a girl of sixteen might have envied, in each cheek. Prayers followed, Claudia slipping in at the last moment with the swift movement that yet was never hurry, and taking charge of the boys at the end of the room furthest from Gerald; Ada kneeling beside him, and giving him altogether too much of her attention. This over, Uncle Beverly, with an old silver tray in his hand, stationed himself behind Mr. Hyde's chair, all sulky dignity.

"Will you sit on my right?" said Claudia, coming up to Gerald, then took her place behind the tea-tray, and put little Keith on her left, around whose neck she pinned an apron. Fresh from Butterworth's and barbarism, Gerald sank graceless into his chair, only to scramble up again very red, napkin in hand, when Mr. Hyde began, which made the boys giggle, and Claudia frown upon them. The meal proceeded pleasantly. Mr. Hyde and Mrs. Blunt and Ada did almost all the talking, and did it very well. Except to make such offers and inquiries as her position demanded, Claudia was silent, but, being fully occupied, did not seem so.

"Are n't *you* going to have some breakfast, Miss Hyde?" asked Gerald at last, when he had seen her pour out ten cups of tea or coffee, and carefully prepare Keith's breakfast, without making any provision for her own needs.

"Oh! yes — after a while. This is a movable sort of feast," she replied, surprised.

But though he made no further remark, he noticed that she first cut a little heap of sandwiches, before



eating anything, and then stopped again to give her father the eleventh cup, with an "Oh! *Father!*" and a shake of the head that expressed no vexation on her own score.

"Do let poor Pistol eat his leek in peace, daughter," said he, and there was that in the look that passed between them pleasant to see. Breakfast over, Mr. Hyde seated himself on a big sofa, first cousin to the one in the hall, and invited Gerald to join him—to smoke. But this he declined to do, decidedly. In five minutes they were deep in a discussion of the respective merits of the odes of Pindar and Anacreon. Gerald, not so much engrossed as Mr. Hyde, saw Uncle Beverly clear the table; saw Claudia fold the cloth and put it in the drawer, and set the bowl of pansies on the sideboard; saw "Porchus" dash in with a pan of boiling water, making faces at the boys. He furtively watched Claudia go to a corner cupboard, and get out a pair of chamois leather gloves, a mop, an apron, a pair of straw cuffs such as artists wear to protect their sleeves, then put a chair for Mrs. Blunt. The two ladies then washed the tea-things (a delicate task which the Virginian housewife never delegates to careless servants), talking all the while in low tones, apparently entirely oblivious of his presence. It was evident that he was not to be "entertained"—that terrible ordeal that he had feared—evident that the family life was to flow on as usual, and, well pleased, he fell into an easier position at once in spite of the sofa, and began to feel less than a stranger and more than a guest. When everything was replaced in order, Claudia left the room, carrying a plate of sandwiches.

"What's that for? Can't we have beat biscuits, Claudia? All the boys at school have sandwiches, and they won't swap a thing with us," he heard Charley say in the hall, presently. He smiled.

"Ah, you agree with me I see! You have simply been arguing for the sake of argument. I have both Maittaire's and Stephens' editions. I must show them to you when we are mutually at liberty," said Mr. Hyde, with much satisfaction, and was not contradicted.

## CHAPTER IX.

“Qui que tu sois, voici ton maître  
Il l’ est, le fut, on le doit être.”

*Voltaire.*

IN this way was Gerald admitted into the Hyde household, and at a leap, in his double capacity of guest and invalid, took some high and stiff barriers—the outer approaches of the citadel. That very day, when Mr. Hyde had finished his pipe, he said:—

“I must now ask you to excuse me, as I am claimed by my usual round of duties. We have not a cushion and keys at hand, but I beg that you will remember that you are presented with the freedom of the ‘Bower,’ and will make yourself entirely one of us, lay aside all constraint, and do anything and everything that commends itself to you. I should advise you to ensconce yourself over here, near the window, and taste the sweets of conscientious and complete idleness. Every breath of this fine, pure, clear air ought to be a step in your recovery. Ah! you will that is right! The ladies of the household will doubtless look in upon you, and we shall meet again at dinner. As an Amphytrion I have grown sadly rusty of late; my absence of mind is proverbial; but I think they can be trusted to see that you lack nothing that the *res angusta domi* permits us to offer nowadays to our most favored guest—which is but little in any direction, especially that of diversion, owing to our very secluded lives and altered fortunes. I think, however, I can promise you a pleasure in meeting my

kinsman, Mr. Egerton. He is a man of parts, and of marked individuality. You have there a clear outlook of sixty miles up into Pontefract Gap, and that is Cross Keys just this side of it, so called from an old inn, the first place of entertainment for man and beast set up on this side of the mountain."

"It is a familiar sign to me, sir," said Gerald. "Like the roads that Rome left us, the Papal arms have been set up in half the counties of England, and have held their own wonderfully. It is curious that a cement, a tavern sign, should outlast with us the greatest arm, and one of the greatest religions the world has seen, is n't it?"

"'Sic transit! Sic transit' — As the bell of our parish church has it, 'Soli Deo Gloria!' Or, if you will pardon the apparent coarseness of the remark, the grand old Hebrew prophet struck it in 'The glory of sinful man is but worms and dung.' Is it not Hazlitt who says 'that one can form a just idea of what fame is by reflecting that one English-speaking person in ten has read Shakespeare'? It confounds a man of sensibility to think of it, yet I opine he is right and within bounds in making his astounding statement," said Mr. Hyde.

"While I was last in York there was a tiny coffin exhumed — packed full of centuries — a baby daughter of a soldier of the Sixth Legion, named Virginia — the inscription '*anima innocentissima*,'" said Gerald.

"Ah! *that* lasts — that is as indestructible as the divine essence of which it is a part — thrown off — reabsorbed, but never to be annihilated. Daughter! Claudia, come, hear this," said Mr. Hyde, stepping toward the pantry.

"I have heard it, with much interest," replied Claudia, in her clear, full tones. "But I can't come now, I have got on my thinking-cap, and must give

my whole mind to dinner. Excuse me, please, father."

"Oh! put a Colchian in the pot, can't you, and come away," he called.

"I might, father, certainly, if I had one. But who will catch the classic hare if I consent to play Hecate or Medea, and cook it? And who will eat my broth when made? You surely have not asked Mr. Mildmay here to poison him outright, have you?"

Gerald hardly caught this, for Claudia was in the kitchen, and Mr. Hyde, who had walked that way, coming back again, said, "I have been going, going, like an auctioneer's bargain, for a long time. I must now begone. Here is a volume of 'Americana' that may interest you;" and with one of his incomparable bows, was now really off.

But Gerald did not read. At the end of an hour he was still sitting there languidly, the big book in his lap. Catechized, he would have said that he was thinking of nothing. But it would have been the fib permissible — inevitable. He was thinking of Claudia; having got within the circle of her personal influence, his interest and imagination were excited.

"Do you find your book uninteresting? Father might have given you something pleasanter — *lighter*, certainly, in every way," said Claudia, coming in, her key-basket in one hand, and lightly laying the other on the top of a high-backed chair opposite him, as she stood there regarding him quietly.

"It *is* rather formidable. I am so unutterably good-for-nothing just now, you see," confessed Gerald, with a smile.

"Perhaps you find your own thoughts pleasanter than any that books can suggest. I often do, ~~I~~ know," said Claudia.

Gerald shook his head, frowned slightly, and said,

"I am not so fortunate. I should cut myself dead if it were in my power. Won't you sit down, Miss Hyde, and make a *tête-à-tête* with myself impossible?"

"Would you like me to read to you?" asked Claudia. She spoke kindly, but there was not the faintest trace of coquetry in her manner or voice.

"If you would, Miss Hyde!" said Gerald, surprised. "It would be delightful."

Claudia set down her basket.

"But am I not imposing upon you?" he said.

"Not at all. I am quite used to it. I am in the habit of reading aloud a great deal to the family. My throat is very strong. It will give me pleasure," replied Claudia courteously, and, without more ado, she walked across the room to the bookcase. "What would you like? History, poetry, biography, novels — they are all represented here," she said, her back to him, her eyes on the books.

"History is often fiction, and some fiction's the best kind of history — poetry I should prefer, though, I think. — But will you not choose something?"

Claudia rapidly took down three volumes, came back, gave the high-backed chair a little push, while Gerald, rising, asked her where she would sit, thanked him, and took her seat.

"Here is Brooke's 'Fool of Quality,' and the 'Faërie Queene,' and 'The Court and Kitchen of Elizabeth' (commonly called 'Joan Cromwell, wife of the late Usurper'). If you like curious old books you may be amused by our little Cavalier library — songs, pamphlets, proclamations, lampoons. I keep them all together on the second shelf there, and this one is most characteristic of the period. Written by a confirmed gossip, evidently; with a tang to her tongue, too. It is extremely malicious. So much so that,

although I am of course her hereditary foe, I can't help feeling for poor 'Joan,' " said Claudia, offering him the book in question.

"Yes. The small wives of great men—and the wives of great men are generally small, or seem so by comparison—do not get the sympathy they deserve. The man doubles up his fist, knocks the world down, and sits on it in comfortable triumph. The great brute's revenge is to make faces at his wife, to heap upon her contempt and ridicule, and fill her with fears for her own safety and his. What do you suppose Cromwell cared for such bodkin-thrusts as these about the waste of 'butchers' meat and drippings' in his household, and his wife's rustic ways? He was more than a match for all his enemies as well as for all England's. But I have no doubt Mistress Joan was made wretched by them," said Gerald, looking through it and smiling over this or that paragraph. "I dare say she wept over it many a night, while he slept as soundly as he did after signing the royal death-warrant!"

"And hid the book for fear he would see it, — yes, if she were weak enough to weep over it she would certainly hide it; and got herself fine clothes from London, and tried her best to be a great lady, and spoilt herself entirely," said Claudia, smiling brightly.

"Very likely she was Cavalier at heart. Fanaticism and bad manners *versus* love-locks, lineage, loyalty! You can see, Miss Hyde, how the scale would turn, with most women," replied Gerald.

"You think, then, that women are incapable of sympathizing with great enthusiasms, great deeds?"

"I have not said so."

"But you do think it?"

"I beg that you will not press the question. ~~In~~ the concrete — perhaps — not as a struggle between

the crown and the people, but between her husband and the king, and until the wind veered, when it would become a struggle between the king whom she fancied she loved and the husband to whom she had grown indifferent, until —”

“Until what?”

“—until she had tired of both, she would *catch* any enthusiasm to which she was exposed in that form—but abstractly, impersonally, to *hold* it —”

He stopped again, seeing Claudia color. “I beg your pardon, I did not mean to get into an argument or rail at lovely woman, who is of course faultless.”

“Who accuses her of being faultless? That *would* be serious. You do not rail, but you sneer, which is less honest and equally unjust. What do you say to the fact that among the Christian martyrs no woman was ever known to recant on the rack?”

“I say that it is what I should have expected of her obstinacy,” replied Gerald, nettled.

“Is his speaking in this way an evidence of lack of respect for women, really, or does it spring from some root of personal bitterness? The latter, I think. But he is an *Englishman*,” thought Claudia, who had reasons of her own for distrusting the men of that race.

“You are severe,” she said coldly. “I don’t think you will care for Brooke. Shall I read Spenser?” Gerald assented, thinking “What an ill-tempered, ill-bred ass she must think me. What possessed me, I wonder?”

Claudia opened her book and began to read. Her back was turned to the open window, framed in honeysuckle, and a wandering breeze caught a little curl in her neck and played with it. She had not gone far before Gerald, who had been looking at her, said suddenly: —



"Pardon this interruption. But I have been so rude that I can enjoy nothing, Miss Hyde, until you let me apologize."

"Oh! if you *think* such things, perhaps murder is best out," said Claudia, with constraint. "It will out, in fact, we are told. I think every true woman wishes for a man's own sake that he should reverence her sex. But it is only the ladies of your own family and nation who have a right to feel offended by your views. The women of Virginia find their difficulty in at all deserving the estimation in which they are held."

"I can't concede that the women of any country are more highly honored or more justly than our own, if you make it a national question. Individually I am without feminine belongings, but I hope I shall never be found lacking in respect to any woman of any country," said Gerald, with so much spirit and sincerity that Claudia forbore to point out that if this were his practice it failed to altogether match his theories.

"It is *a* woman," thought Claudia, and did not dislike his warmth, smiled, went back to her book, saying:—

"I should be sorry to doubt it."

She now with a good grace applied herself to her self-imposed task, and read on, and on, without any of the rhetorical tricks and graces that are supposed to constitute elocution, but with the utmost intelligence, spirit, and appreciation. Very occasionally, indeed, she glanced at Gerald, and thought he seemed interested; as he was, and not a little surprised to hear her do "such a stiff bit of reading with so much ease."

"You stick at nothing in the way of pronunciation, Miss Hyde," he could not help remarking at last. "You must know him very well to take all those

archaisms at a gallop, as it were. Who taught you to read Spenser?"

"Father. Almost the first thing I remember is this book — father sitting on a bench in the garden reading it aloud. He is a very great favorite of mine, and not really difficult at all, though the spelling gives many people that impression. Have I spoilt it for you by my bad habit of 'galloping,' as you term it? I fear so. Father is always correcting me for it, but I get interested and away we go!"

"I never had, on the contrary, such a clear impression of Spenser. Your enunciation is rapid but very distinct; I think you may claim 'the laurel meed of mightie conquerors!' Thank you so much. It really was delightful."

"He is that, isn't he? — 'the poet of poets!'" agreed Claudia brightly. "I am so fond of all that old stuff — Chaucer, the Romaunt of the Rose, Froissart, Ronsard. I never tire of it. I picked up a volume of modern poetry the other day, all ashes and bones, and sea-weed, and ghastly grimness, not to say ghoulishness, death, and despair — you know the sort of thing — and, after an hour of it, I had to take the taste out of my mouth with the first part of the Canterbury Tales, which exactly matched the June morning, and convinced me it was not disgraceful to be healthy, happy, content — when we can manage it."

"Life is not all beer and skittles, Miss Hyde."

"The world is not a charnel-house either, Mr. Mildmay."

"But what is to be done when one can't manage to be either healthy, or happy, or content?"

"A tremendous question, truly! I should say a little patience, a good deal of fortitude, might help to mend the first two, and humility the last. Two

o'clock! (looking at a quaint round-bodied old watch, suspended from her neck by a black cord.) I must fly! Cousin Miles dines with us, and I have still to make the salad of his heart."

"Don't forget to let an onion animate the whole! You know the famous recipe?"

"Oh! yes. I hope, though, Cousin Miles won't feel it necessary to 'plunge his fingers in the salad-bowl.' Here comes Cousin Helen and Auntie and Ada." She rose. Gerald opened the door for her into the pantry, and got the bow of a lady who does not reckon as a personal attention the general civilities that are, or ought to be, accorded her sex.

"How frank she is and yet how modest. She is charmingly unaffected, natural — seems to have no self-consciousness — it is the perfection of manner. Perhaps it isn't nature at all, though, but high art. She is clever enough to appear anything she likes," thought Gerald, as he joined the other ladies.

He went to his room. Dinner came, and so did Cousin Miles, benevolent and placid, warmly welcomed. Mrs. Blunt entertained Gerald afterwards on the porch for an hour with Indian legends. He smoked with the gentlemen, and tried to hear what Cousin Miles had to say to justify the reputation given him by Mr. Hyde, but without success, then and ever afterwards.

"I can't catch half he says, for the life of me. Perhaps the 'parts' I lose are the remarkable ones. He looks like one of his own sheep," he thought. But Gerald produced very much the impression he had expected to gain without making the least attempt to do so. He talked of various matters with which he was naturally familiar, such as the perfection of the Parisian police system; the "landwehr" organization in Germany; home affairs; always with modesty

and simplicity, and only in so far as they were suggested by what he heard. And Cousin Miles sat and gazed fixedly at him, made a few remarks to himself in his boots, thoughtfully stroked his chin when he left, and said impressively a little above a whisper, as he shook hands, "I am privileged to have heard you converse this afternoon. My visit to-day was particularly intended for you. Will you not very soon give us the satisfaction of welcoming you at 'The Briars'?" which surprised and amused Gerald very much.

Ada by no means approved of the trio, and made various attempts to secure his society and conversation for herself, but entirely failed. Gerald was politeness itself, placed chairs for the ladies, picked up Cousin Helen's worsteds, rose when he should have risen, nor seated himself until they were seated, threw away his cigar when approached, and was apparently entirely at their service, yet for the purpose of ordinary flirtation was as unseizable in his totality as a billiard ball, for all his polish — indeed, because of it. However, when Ada quite insisted about sundown upon his taking a little walk about the place, he assented with an admirable imitation of alacrity. As he passed through the hall he looked through the open doors for Claudia, but she was not visible. She saw the pair set out, from her window upstairs, however, and her face clouded. "We shall have another Hargreaves affair, I suppose. I wish Ada were different. He seems very superior to the others — but may not be, at all. I don't believe she has done the lamps. I'll run down and see," she thought.

Meanwhile, Ada was entertaining Gerald to the best of her ability, quite charmed by him, and making every effort to be charming. If, however, Claudia could have looked into his mind as he languidly strolled beside her pretty sister, she would have found

cause for vexation, indeed, for her loyal heart, but of another kind; for he was thinking, "If the smallpox of affectation did not so disfigure everything she says and does, she would be attractive enough. She is very pretty in a way, and has absorbed a good deal in a clever family, I should judge. One can see the world turns on her pivot only, though."

"Such a nice old place, this," he remarked, as they were returning. "It reminds me of some of the houses of the Georgian gentry in Kent and Suffolk."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed Ada apathetically. "But it is so dreadfully dull! Nothing ever happens here. There is never anything to do, and the days are so long. I am always hoping father will sell it and go to some city to live, where I could have all the pleasures and amusements that other girls have, instead of wasting all my life down here in the country. Nothing" — archly — "could induce me to marry a man who lived in the country."

"Quite right to marry a city if you prefer it. The *man* is an 'accidental,' to use a musical phrase. And does your sister want to leave the place and go elsewhere to live?"

"Claudia! Oh! no. Claudia and I are not a *bit* alike." ("So I have discovered," thought Gerald.) "She is devoted to the place. Nothing provokes her more than to have any fault found with it. She can stay here the year round, and declares she likes it better in winter than in summer. There she is in the garden, now." And Gerald looking, saw her there, envied by the boys, who were trotting briskly backward and forward to and from the miniature lake, with water for the flowers, while she seemed pleasantly absorbed in administering it. She wished them a cheerful "good-evening!" but did not stop when they walked down the steps and joined her, or rather

entered the garden, for her movements precluded anything more cumbersome than a butterfly from bearing her company. There was a glorious golden sunset in the west, and Ada perched in an affected attitude on the low wall, and, putting her chin on her hand, gave herself up to the most rapt meditation apparently as she gazed in that quarter.

"I have been practicing with 'the thrilling point of deadly yron brand which launcht his lordly hart,' Miss Hyde," said Gerald, sauntering toward Claudia, and laughingly presenting the tip of his inevitable umbrella as he spoke.

"I wonder if Spenser had an umbrella? It makes a formidable weapon if not a very poetical one," said she, in smiling acknowledgment of the quotation.

"Keith, dear, you can stop now; sit down and get cool. Five buckets is a very good allowance for such a small boy."

"But you haven't done the larkspurs yet," said Keith.

"Never mind; Wyn will bring the can presently," said Claudia.

"Why may not I be useful? Here, youngster, give me that bucket," said Gerald.

"You may, certainly, if you feel equal to it. I never get enough water for my flowers, never," agreed Claudia composedly.

In a moment he was back with two buckets.

"Lucky larkspurs! Thank you. No, I'll do it. Only see how grateful the poor thirsty things are. It has been so hot to-day and yesterday."

Three times did Gerald fill his buckets, and three times were they gravely emptied by Claudia, who then did a little clipping and training, and finally said:—

"Now, by way of reward, I will show you my garden if you like, formally. I call it mine, but it is

really my great-grandmother's garden, the first 'Lady of the Bower.' You see here are beds of all the old-fashioned flowers of which she was fond — marigolds, mignonette, wall-flowers, London-pride, 'daffydown-dillies,' larkspurs, four o'clocks, sweet-williams, bleeding hearts. I have taken pleasure in keeping them as she had them; and I love them myself. They breathe out old English poems as plainly as possible — madrigals and ditties 'in the merry month of May' — to the right nose and ears."

"Sonnets to Chloe, Euphelia, Amaryllis, Diaphenia. True, Miss Hyde, you have all the elements for one now, flowers, maids, birds and all. How the scents come out as the sun sinks."

"Here are my pansies; aren't they beauties? My roses even are old-fashioned. This one, for instance, buttoned down in the middle, and pure rose to its heart. Isn't the odor incomparable? Will you have it? I have a few modern varieties of teas. I like the whole family. It is an odor that never cloy, a rose that never gives quite all, it seems to me; sometimes declines to give at all, on demand. I have felt rebuked as for a rudeness sometimes when I have seized and smelt one, but perceived nothing, and have sometimes held it in my hand for five minutes before getting a satisfactory whiff."

"What a pleasure flowers must be to you," said Gerald tritely, thinking a compliment that happily he had the wit to suppress.

"They are, indeed. When spring comes I should seize a knife and fall to work in my cell, if I were in a prison, I believe, the instinct is so strong in me to dig and plant. It is a sort of mild frenzy."

"Perhaps you are a descendant of Daphne, and it is the sap rising in your veins," said Gerald, and rammed his hands into his pockets.

"Not I; but we call our laurels *Daphnes* in this country. See what a fine cluster we have on the upper terrace there. Don't suppose you have seen all the garden yet. Father always says that gardens in old days were not made simply for pleasure, and that we have forgotten how to combine the useful and ornamental in due proportion in that as in everything else. See! Here are all the homely old herbs — thyme, borax, peppermint, sage, pennyroyal, and others. And here are the 'simples' — horehound, agrimony, camomile, lavender, eye-bright. My fore-mother was considered quite a leech in her day, and her herbs were renowned in all the country round. And she was a noted housewife, too. I must make, while you are with us, some of the old dishes in her book of recipes — the 'Bower's' own particular dish — a Cavalier survival called 'Topsy Squire.' I often find use for the herbs, too. You may believe it or not, but they cured Cousin Miles of gout when all the doctors considered him a hopeless invalid. And Uncle Beverly never will have anybody else to prescribe for him when he has 'a fever-ager.'"

"I make no doubt of it, Miss Hyde. We are getting back to herbalism now, you know, and mineral medicines are going out of favor. You would be interested, I think, by the Old Physick Garden, Chelsea, established by the Society of Apothecaries in the seventeenth century. Sloane, Evelyn, Linnæus, all worked in it and loved it, and Grinling Gibbons used to sketch there — perhaps the design for that very mantel shelf in your drawing-room, for all I know."

"He *did* design a gown for an ancestress of mine. I'll show it to you some day — a brocade, clover-pinks on a pale-blue ground. A gown was a gown in those days, and it is really lovely still, what remains of it, that is — two widths," cried Claudia.



"Fancy!" said Gerald.

"No. *Fact*, I assure you," said Claudia, and both laughed.

"Clover-pinks on a blue ground sound rather giddy, gaudy for that period of sober expenditure," said Gerald. "I am afraid your ancestress was an 'extravagant puss'! I always think of mine somehow as dressed in drabs and grays."

"She was, ruinously so; at least her contemporaries thought so. Nowadays she would be thought singularly prudent for a belle, and a beauty, and an heiress, if not miserly."

"That was the day of 'Women of Worth'—this of Worth's women. You look as though you had never heard of Worth, Miss Hyde."

"I never have. You look surprised," said Claudia, coloring a little.

"Not at all. Only it is like being told by somebody that he has never heard a note of 'Pinafore.'"

"*I* never have," repeated Claudia. "Is it very disgraceful?"

"On the contrary, delightful; but rare. Worth is a French-English man-modiste hated of European husbands and fathers, and adored of maids and wives, until he sends in his bill. 'Pinafore' is a bit of clean fun in the shape of a little opera by an English composer. You will soon have more than enough of him in Virginia, I daresay. I am sorry I mentioned Worth—Blue Beard's fatal closet, you see. Mr. Hyde will not thank me."

"Oh! there is no danger! I must keep to the drabs and grays of sober expenditure, whether I like or not, and only look at my bit of brocade on rainy days in the garret—and then without a sigh except for the wearer, who was a most unhappy woman."

"It was of *yourself* that you were thinking when

you sighed. We do not care enough for our forbears to feel oppressed by their dead woes and griefs."

Claudia shot a swift glance at him, as if recognizing his acumen. "You are right; I was thinking of what I would do if I had the 70,000*l.* dower she brought her husband."

"She wants money, too, like the others," thought Gerald; "they are all alike."

"You would like, then, to be rich, to travel, to gratify your tastes, to have your gowns designed by great artists?" he coldly asked.

"I was not thinking of myself at all," she said simply; "but of father, the boys, the 'Bower.'" And as these topics seemed to her not those to interest or to be discussed with a stranger, she went back to what he had said about the economical spirit of our grandfathers and their grandfathers. Gerald smiled again, and there was some interesting talk on his part about the ideas, values, and purchasing power of money then.

"That Sphinx-Pyramid, Life, seemed to stand so much more firmly on its base in those days. In this age of glare and blare and unrest, of tinsel and syllabub, we seem to be trying to balance it on its apex. I am not an old man, but I sometimes think I am a reactionist at heart," said Gerald, poking among the simples with his umbrella.

"Auntie sums it up as the age of vulgarity. Shall we go in now? I think there is nothing more to show you in our poor old garden."

"A dear old garden, I should call it," said Gerald, looking about him.

"Do you really like it?" said Claudia eagerly. "People nearly always either ridicule or patronize it. Mr. Wardour thought it ought to be ploughed up and put in celery, and Mr. Hargreaves that I ought 'to go for ribbon-gardening'!"

"I like it immensely," declared Gerald. "You will find me sitting by the lake some morning, with my eyes revolving in a fine poetic frenzy, as like as not writing an ode to Mrs. Blunt's eyebrow. War-dour is a groundling — clod! But who takes care of it?"

"I do, with the boys' help in the spading and weeding. I have tried to spade, too; that is, I stood up on the thing, but that ended the transaction."

They had now arrived at the steps, and there sat down. Ada in a pout had disappeared. Suddenly there was a sound of rushing wings overhead, and Gerald, throwing back his head and looking up, saw a great flock of snow-white pigeons sweep in like a cloud out of the heavens stretching blue above him. Some of them flew between the great pillars, and made the circuit of the lofty open porch; some perched on the capitals; in a surprisingly short time they had all disappeared.

"By Jove! there must be a hundred of them! What does it mean, Miss Hyde?" said Gerald, watching them with much interest.

"There are, I suppose; and it means that they are 'Bower' birds, and have come home to roost. When 'My Lady' was brought here from England, a bride, there was one pair already in possession, and she had a sentiment about them. She would never let them be disturbed, mentioned them in her will. There they have been ever since, and have multiplied and thriven. We don't feed them, or heed them, indeed, particularly, except when young squabs are in season. But father has forbidden the children and servants to make war upon them, beyond levying this house-tax. And we are all very fond of them."

"Ah! that accounts for it! I heard above my room the other night strange struttings and coo-

and rustlings, and could not make out at first where they came from, what they were. I concluded finally that a flock of pigeons had stopped to take breath."

"No, our pigeons are not 'temporaries,' like Miss Susan Nipper," said Claudia.

The fire-flies were thick in the dark old garden when Claudia and Gerald, surprised by the tea-bell, came into the hall, where Uncle Beverly was ragefully leading "Pornchus" back toward the dining-room by the ear, and calling him a "nigger!" with the further indignity conveyed by the adjective "trifling," after the manner of his race.

"Uncle Beverly seems rather a peppery old party," said Gerald, laughing. "I hope he won't be trying that on me."

"I hope not, I'm sure. But he has so long been the custodian of the family manners, morals, honor, and effects that I am not at all sure he may not feel called upon to extend his authority over guests," replied Claudia, from the stairs, with a little nod and smile of farewell — *au revoir*, rather.

The evening was spent in the parlor — a delightful old eighteenth-century apartment. It had a tremendous and very high-shouldered mantel-piece, with Grinling-Gibbons, low-drooping wreaths of fruit and flowers carved on it. It was paneled throughout with old oak, which the taste of a preceding generation had (with the mantel) painted white, and which had now taken on an ivory tint, that made a perfectly harmonious background for the furniture and decoration. It seemed as if stillness and tranquility had been caught and caged in its four walls forever, so full was it of cool tints, effects, tones, of a pleasant, gentle silence of perpetuity and peace, most grateful and not the least melancholy; a room to subdue the boisterous, to hush anger, to chasten if not afflict the soul of

the vulgar by its lofty calm, to preach to the thoughtless, to charm the thoughtful. "It looks as though nothing in it had been changed for a hundred years, as if nothing would ever change," thought Gerald as he looked about him.

"I can see 'My Lady,' in hoop, powder, patches, sitting at that old harp in the corner. That is a good picture—looks like a Gainsborough; has a look of Miss Hyde about the eyes; the others are evidently family portraits by inferior artists, but still interesting. Silhouettes, too. China dogs on the hearth. If only the chairs were more comfortable for the degenerate bodies of the nineteenth century!"

The evening was more than half gone, and they were all at whist when Claudia slipped in and sat down, with a small embroidery frame, near the lamp. She made one or two remarks, twice rose and snuffed the lights in the tall silver candlesticks on the card table (mahogany, with the four Georges at the corners in wonderful marquetry wigs), and then went quietly back to her work, unconscious that Gerald was privately comparing her with the Gainsborough grandmother beyond.

The games over, Gerald was asked if he played or sang, and confessed that he "had both small vices."

"Why a vice?" asked practical Cousin Helen. "I would give anything if I were musical."

"Will you not oblige us with a performance on the pianoforte?" asked Mr. Hyde.

"Won't you play something very soft and sweet, for me?" urged Ada.

"Father, Mr. Mildmay may not find it agreeable to play on our piano," remarked Claudia sententiously.

"Why not, my daughter? It has always been accounted a good instrument, I believe," said Mr. Hyde, who thought once a good piano always one.

"Yes, I know, father. But it is an old one now, and out of tune. Mr. Wardour, you remember, pronounced it 'horrible,' and advised our selling it for whatever it would fetch, before it got any worse."

Mr. Hyde addressed Gerald with dignity: —

"Do not allow yourself to be placed at a disadvantage, I beg, by our unfortunate inability to offer you an instrument capable of giving fitting expression to your talents and training, sir," he said, with a wave of his shapely hands. "It is rarely possible in this sequestered situation to secure proper attention for a musical instrument of any kind. I remember my mother was seriously annoyed at times by the fact, being more sensitive to discord than any of her descendants."

"Oh! I will play with pleasure if anybody cares to hear me. I am not a musician at all in the technical and pyrotechnical sense. But I am very fond of it," said Gerald.

He sat down accordingly. He struck a chord on the yellow old keys; a wild jangle from demented, dumb, broken strings, suggesting asthma, toothache, everything that was painful, went up. But Gerald did not wince. For an hour he sang and played as if the piano were perfection; and he gave as much satisfaction as Von Bulow ever did to an audience.

"You execute with surprising proficiency," said Mr. Hyde. "There does not seem to be anything wrong with the piano, after all, Claudia. Can you not give us 'Love's Young Dream,' or the 'Blue Bells of Scotland'? If you will, I have no doubt that my sister here will be glad to reward you with one of her fine old songs — the 'Land of the Leal' — eh, Sister Thomasia?"

"Mr. Mildmay does not wish to hear an old woman make her old songs after all the music he has heard

and made, I am sure, Brother Addison. Excuse me, if you please," said Mrs. Blunt.

"But, indeed, I do!" said Gerald, and offered her his arm promptly. "Will you not sing for us?"

"No. I object to being absurd. I never had much voice, and I lost that little forty years ago. Excuse me," said Mrs. Blunt decidedly.

"But you were always accounted a fine singer, Sister Thomasia. You do yourself injustice," said Mr. Hyde, who could not understand at all these sudden changes from major to minor keys in matters musical. "Come! come! Give us a song. I never knew you abashed by a stranger before."

"It is very unkind of you to refuse on *that* ground, Mrs. Blunt," said Gerald.

"Nobody sings like her," said Mr. Hyde. "Do me the kindness, Sister Thomasia."

Gerald's arm was still at her disposal and she now took it, saying:—

"It would be even more absurd to refuse now, Brother Addison."

Gerald took her to the piano, and, having carefully established her there, dropped into a chair by Claudia, while Mrs. Blunt sang the sweet old words of the "Land of the Leal," with the ghost of a voice.

"Thank you, Sister Thomasia. That is what I call a song. I've been listening to it now for forty years and more. Yes, *more*, Sister Thomasia, though I respect a lady's secret far too well to say how much more, and I am not tired of it yet. Don't you like it, Mr. Mildmay?"

"I do, very much. Thank you, Mrs. Blunt," said Gerald.

Claudia had slyly cast more than one glance at him, to see how he would take it. She had seen him quiet

and respectful during a great many verses, under provocation and temptation.

"The piano is dreadful, I know," she now said to him; "and, as auntie says, 'voices do not last forever,' yet, like father, I think no one sings like auntie."

"How could I have ever thought that she was not pretty," thought Gerald, meeting her eyes, so woman-soft, woman-sweet.

"Have you a piano key and tuning fork, Miss Hyde?" he asked.

"Yes; we have both, I think."

"Then, if you will let me, I will see if I can't put a few strings into better order. I can tune a bit. When I was a lad, a chap came down from town and tuned the piano at home, and I had been ill, shut up indoors for some time, and, being at a loss what to do, made him show me how it was done. Several times since I have tried it, and I don't think my hand has quite lost its cunning. If you will trust me, then? I can see it has been a very good instrument, and perhaps I am very rash."

"You are very kind. It would be so nice to have it in order. I am not musical, except that I enjoy nothing so much," said Claudia.

"Won't you play again? It is such a treat to watch your *fingering*," said Ada, coming up, and Claudia turned away from Gerald rather brusquely. It was Mr. Hyde who suavely broke up the party, led the way into the hall, and took his candle from the table there, thus ending Gerald's first day in a new world.

him  
quite



## CHAPTER X.

"So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

*Wordsworth.*

"The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent."

*Byron.*

GERALD MILD MAY spent the next six weeks at the "Bower" in the calm routine of a life whose established order had not materially altered for generations — a life without excitements, but not without pleasures, all the greater and pleasanter for not being called such ; a life full of interests as important, relatively, as the floods, famines, revolutions, failures of the great world outside ; of duties faithfully fulfilled ; of great rewards — in short, the family life of the Hydes. In its refinement, its simplicity, its kindliness, its long-inherited, long-practiced traditions of courtesy and hospitality, it was the life of all Virginian families of the same class. And, as we shall see, it was something more. Perhaps its greatest charm for him lay in the way it absorbed and assimilated a foreign element, making him feel himself part and parcel of it in a little while, — a new current mingling with its life blood and flowing on in the familiar channels. It was methodical yet variable. He had no sense of being fitted into a machine which must go on regardless of such a trifle as a guest ; no

fear of arresting its action, of paralyzing by some let or hindrance its normal functions — the supreme wretchedness of the dweller within alien gates. Machinery there was, but it was made subordinate to the wishes, plans, purposes of the family, even much more, to his; so that his personal liberty and identity were not sacrificed for a moment. He was, he felt, free, the master of his own actions and sole judge of all that affected himself, absolute lord as before of all that domain, without which a guest cannot even begin to be happy or content. All his private rights, indeed, were scrupulously respected — his right to read uninterrupted, to write in quiet, to keep his room if he wished to do so undisturbed, to go and come unquestioned, to be silent sometimes, and absent at others — in short, to be at home. The Spaniard says, "My house is yours," meaning that it is his. The Southerner makes it yours while you are beneath his roof without saying anything on the subject. The liberty accorded Gerald was also claimed. Every member of the household went his or her way; yet he was never lost sight of, and if he had been the most hypersensitive of men he could not have felt neglected, so continually if unobtrusively were his wishes, comfort, and happiness considered, studied, provided for.

He was made acquainted with the family hours, and begged to disregard them when it suited his convenience. He was told of the family plans for the day, and then left at liberty to share them or not as he pleased. He was admitted into the family confidence without reserve within well-bred limits.

He was never entertained, never left entirely to his own devices except by his own choice. He was never remembered in one sense, never forgotten in another.

Gerald felt that he had only one cause for dissatisfaction, and that was that he did not see more of

Claudia. He saw her constantly, across the hall through his open door, for instance, brushing little Keith's hair, or tying his cravat, and would hear the child's soap-and-watery splashes and outcries, and her cheerful tones, low in pitch, yet always seeming to come from some higher level than ordinary voices.

He would catch a glimpse of her pink sunbonnet among the corn in the garden; of her slim figure, long apron, and a pair of white arms briskly engaged with the rolling-pin in the kitchen. One moment she would be tacking clematis against the wall, the next whisking into or out of the storeroom or smokehouse, holding keys that were big enough to unlock the Bastille. She pervaded the whole place, but was always disappearing like the bogus ghost of a spiritualistic *séance*. He found her washing the dining-room windows one day, and, not one whit abashed, she asked him to pick up the towel which had blown outside, and went on with her work. When she had done the upper sash he moved the stepladder away for her and got a bright "Thank you. See! There's a true lover's knot and distich on one of the old panes (the only one left) with my great-great's initials in the loops;" and sat down afterwards just as she was, and talked to him for half an hour, most delightfully and unaffectedly, he thought. He had several such talks, but they were not very frequent, and their effect was to make him wish for more. "She has the pleasantest voice and the pleasantest eyes that I ever saw," he mused. "There is not a gleam of vanity or coquetry, no sparkle of malice in all their brightness; frank amusement and intelligence only, usually; sometimes a sudden gleam of fire, or drop of dew, when she is moved. So different from her sister! She has only one note, like that tiresome 'Bob White,' and if one talks of the Pyramids her idea is that she would like to have her picture taken sitting on one of

the biggest stones. How two girls can have grown up together in the same family and be so utterly unlike, I really can't imagine."

Mr. Hyde was no longer in a position to put a body-servant and horse at his sole command, as he would once have done. But every morning Gerald would hear a knock, and opening his door would find Uncle Beverly outside, solemn and glum, testily conscious of an importance too often disregarded, especially in these altered times and by a younger generation, but stiffly prepared to do his devoir as of old.

"*I'se* here for your orders, sah," he would say, a towel over his arm, a whisk in his hand, and, though rarely allowed to play the valet, he never failed to offer his services with all his own dignity, to perform gravely such offices as were required of him, and then depart with mournful state. "I never presume to chaff Uncle Beverly," said Gerald to Claudia, "as has sometimes been my habit with servants. He always contrives to make and keep me six years old, and an awful culprit somehow! And I could no more be familiar with him than with the ghost of Caesar! Our relations are consequently somewhat strained, but on the whole amicable."

The library was at Gerald's disposal, and he spent a good many hours in it. Until "Eulinka" came, Mr. Hyde would often ask Gerald to drive or ride over the farm with him. "Not a Pegasus, not even a thorough-bred," Mr. Hyde would say as they jogged along side by side on the fat old farm-horses. "My stables would scandalize my forbears if they could see them, see the only mount I can offer a guest. But, except to the wild temper of youth, not an unsatisfactory means of locomotion, and the philosopher strives to keep the equal mind, before all things — certainly it will not do to be conquered by an army of gnats when the lions and dragons have been all slain, I tell myself, when I fear to fall into the peevish complaints of a fretful old age."

Did Gerald wander aimlessly here or there about the house, somebody at once cropped up and proposed a walk, a game of chess, an occupation or diversion of some kind, yet he never felt himself measured for his pleasures, as it were — nothing was cut or dried about them, all that was done for him was spontaneous, therefore delightful.

“I have never enjoyed a visit so much,” he often thought, “and it is because I am not visiting. I have stayed in houses where I was never allowed to forget for ~~the~~ moment that I was a guest, where the sound of the breakfast-bell, if I were belated, was more alarming than the trumpeting of a wounded elephant, a scratch given the wardrobe accidentally a thing to repent to my dying day, without hope even of forgiveness — where my room seemed to be the room of everybody except myself, where to misplace anything, shift a chair, open a window, strike a light, spill a drop of water, or press a flower was to be either a buccaneer and run up the skull and cross-bones, or to crawl on all fours like a Corean convict, and beg that my head might be taken for a football. How wonderfully kind they have been to me! How kind they seem to everybody! I have no sense of constraint or restraint whatever. I don’t know a greater bore than the first, and I trust I am in no need of the second. When I am, it will be time enough to get into my strait-waistcoat then; meanwhile this Briton enjoys his freedom.”

The freedom of which he was thinking was sometimes accorded to people who abused their privileges, it must be confessed.

The Hydes had once a “guest” who stayed in bed a week, and had all his meals served upstairs, simply because, as he frankly stated, “he was so comfortable there was no use getting up;” a stray book-agent this, received in the kindly Southern fashion because he had

need of rest and shelter, and was evidently mortally weary of introducing a "Life" of somebody that had nearly been the death of him. They had another of their own class, who took advantage of a system that is susceptible of abuse, to give them the uncoveted pleasure of his society for three months, once, when asked to spend a week. And there had been still others, whose exactions and demands would sound incredible if set down, and were only equalled by the selfishness and ill-breeding that prompted the forbearance that tolerated them. But the remedy for this particular evil is always at hand, and such guests are soon known, shunned throughout whole States in the South, in which there are no society journals published, but in which there is widely circulated among all the families of a certain social rank, verbally or by news-letter, an amazing amount of information about the individuals composing its society, thanks to the visits, intermarriages, and other close, continuous relations of two centuries more or less. At the end of a fortnight Gerald had made an attempt to leave the "Bower" that was really very creditable to him, considering how much he wanted to stay, but the idea was scouted as preposterous, and evidently excited surprise.

"You have only just come. You surely don't call *this* a visit!" said Mr. Hyde, who thought it might stand for a morning call. He had been bred to consider as a visit the coming of this or that relative with five or six children, a mountain of luggage, servants, and horses for from three months to a year, and in spite of his changed fortunes his standards remained unaltered, his hospitality limitless.

"But I should, indeed! We should, rather, in England," exclaimed Gerald.

"But you are in *Virginia*," said Mrs. Blunt graciously. Mrs. Blunt had taken a fancy to Gerald.

Gerald looked from her to Claudia, who said nothing. She smiled, however, and presently Gerald was accepting with acknowledgments a further lease of life at the "Bower." Quiet as it was, it somehow had not yet occurred to him to be dull. For one thing, new health, new life was beginning to tingle in every vein and brace every nerve, fibre, muscle of the physical man. He had no longer any excuse for allowing Claudia gravely to cut up his food for him on one side, as for little Keith on the other, for he had laid aside his sling, and as she had done him the little service without the smallest affectation or embarrassment until then, so now, perceiving this, she instantly relinquished it. This, to his slightly inflamed consciousness, looked like indifference, relief.

"You are no doubt glad to be rid of the bother," he said to her, with a quick glance and a little jerk of the knife with which he was tackling the bread by his plate, not at all like the usual composed grace of his table manners, to say nothing of an honest English blush.

"I'll come round there and sit by you, and do it for you," exclaimed Ada, with *empressement*, half rising as she spoke, as if to carry out her intention.

"Oh! no; pray don't! at least on my account. I'm all right and can manage *perfectly*," said Gerald hastily. Ada sat down again. Claudia looked first at her sister with a little frown between her straight brows and a stiffening of all the muscles of her face that did not escape Gerald. "If you can't help yourself, of course, it is no trouble to me," she then said to Gerald with a formality that was almost severe, and in a doubtful tone; she then smiled and added:—

"But you seem to be doing very well, and must be glad to be independent again," to which Gerald assented outwardly. Inwardly he was feeling just a trifle aban-

doned and forsaken, which was absurd, as he would himself have granted if he could have been brought to recognize or confess it. In all his life only two women had troubled themselves particularly, persistently, and disinterestedly about his comfort, his aunt and his old nurse; and somehow it had given him something of the same comfortable and comforted feeling to be so far dependent on Miss Hyde, with an appreciable difference in her favor that made of it a totally distinct pleasure, and of her at once her whole sex, and the only member of it. He was unconscious of this fact, of course; of the fact that not only had new life come to him, but that new forces were at work in that life, finer and more powerful than any it had ever known, arousing his interest, quickening his pulses already — already winging his aspirations, and destined vitally to affect his whole character and destiny.

"I hope they are not finding me a bore, and asking me to stop on merely out of civility," he said to himself.

But with Gerald the Hydes had no fault to find on any score. And on his part he found himself strangely content — no longer gloomy, dispirited, irritable.

"I was getting into a thoroughly morbid state at Butterworth's," he thought, and half wondered where all the angry wretchedness and bitterness that had been so intolerable had gone. It seemed to have slipped like the albatross from the neck of the Ancient Mariner into a sea of oblivion, and left him a peaceful and even happy man.

He was disposed to think highly of the Hydes, collectively and individually — Ada excepted. He began by getting an insight into the composition of the genuine Virginian household. He gradually learned that "Cousin" Helen was the sister of the first wife of Mr. Hyde's dead brother — not a cousin at all — broken



down in health from years of teaching in the West, poor, "visiting" indefinitely these admirable substitutes for ordinary relations, and evidently as welcome as flowers in May, and treated with as much consideration and affection as though she had been an aged millionaire aunt, from whom they all had "expectations."

He discovered that little Keith was the son of a third cousin who had been "unfortunate," and, dying, had left ten children to be promptly adopted (in as many families) by his kith and kin, apparently as a mere matter of course; to be educated in due time; in this case to be tenderly cherished, as having an irresistible claim upon each and every member of the family.

Wyndham and Charley, he found, were the sons of Mr. Hyde's eldest son, who was in the navy; had left them at the "Bower" during his widower's summer, and, though three years the husband of a South American beauty, had never seen fit to reclaim them. Mrs. Blunt, it appeared, had lived with her brother always. It seemed to Gerald that in the matter of relations he had never seen or heard of such a family. And yet he had no idea of the real state of the case, and felt that he was exaggerating when he said to himself that they appeared to be related to the whole neighborhood. They were; they were related to the whole State for that matter, more or less — more chiefly; and to a good many people out of it.

Supposing himself to have got a good hold on the Hyde next him at table, he could, by following it up, have easily ripped up the entire social fabric from Hampton Roads to the Alleghanies. For the social fabric in Virginia is but the extension of the Family which underlies it like cocoa-grass, indestructible, deathless, not to be rooted out by fire or sword, storm or tempest, woven and interwoven, laced and interlaced, closely,

inextricably as in a mat, attached to the soil by myriads of deep-rooted fibres of sentiment, prejudice, passion, of more than two centuries' growth.

"There is no chance of my being asked to stop on longer now," thought Gerald ruefully, one morning — the Saturday of the sixth week of his stay. "I shall have to take myself off on Monday, I suppose. I can't quarter myself on them for life! I shall miss them all very much. Butterworth's refined and delightful *ménage* will be a pill after this dear old home."

He broached the subject again accordingly that evening with decision — a boldness born of the weakness felt within. But the proposition excited something like general dismay, and seemed to be as wholly unexpected as unpopular.

"But you are teaching us cricket —"

"And you promised to teach us the Yorkshire games you used to play when you was a little boy at your cousin's," clamored Edmund and Keith in a breath.

"I was thinking of a picnic to Winona Mountain this coming week," said Cousin Helen, "and that you would help us carry up the baskets."

"Such haste to leave us is anything but flattering," said Ada, who never willingly parted with any man under seventy. "The whole thing will be spoilt if you go away."

"I really must go, I am sorry to say; I have been here six weeks, you know, and can scarcely be said to have been in haste," persisted Gerald, but with a wavering glance at Claudia that illy matched the firmness of his tone. "I have enjoyed myself tremendously, and have no longer the least excuse for staying, for I am quite recovered."

"Stay without one, then," said Mrs. Blunt heartily.

"I trust you need no fresh assurance of the gratification afforded us by your presence among us," said

Mr. Hyde. "What is six weeks in the country? Nothing. Pliny says, in speaking of the elegant retirement of his villa —"

Here Pontius dashed out upon the porch with the mail, just brought by him from the post-office, and Pliny remained in elegant retirement.

"You are very good, sir," finally concluded Gerald, reverting to the subject. "I should like nothing better. But I think I ought to go. This is not making my Virginian fortune, you see; pleasant as it is, I have no time to waste."

"Well, well, come back again as soon as possible, by way of making due amend. Let us see as much of you as we can during your sojourn in our midst," said Mr. Hyde cordially, and Cousin Miles, coming round the corner of the house at that moment, and somehow making it known in his inaudible fashion that he was mounted on a newly purchased horse, that he wished them to examine critically, all the family trooped down the steps to greet him, leaving Claudia and Gerald *tête-à-tête*, and Keith walking around the edge of the porch outside the railing.

"May I leave Eulinka here for your use, Miss Hyde, for a while?" suggested Gerald, as he nervously twirled his hat. "I shall have no use for her for some weeks, and, if it would give you any pleasure, I should be only too glad to do so. You are fully a match for her. With most ladies I should not care to take the responsibility involved in a possible runaway or accident of some kind. I confess I was nervous enough when you mounted her for the first time, but when I saw how light your hand was on the reins, and how you took the nonsense out of her from the start, I was entirely reassured on that score. Will you keep her for a bit, and, perhaps — may we have some more rides together, later?"

"Thank you, but I am afraid I must decline Eulinka's company," replied Claudia. "I have a very busy month before me of unlimited pickling and preserving. The storeroom shelves are as empty as last year's nests, and Cousin Helen is scandalized. Besides, I don't know that I am a match for Eulinka. She is not vicious exactly, but she has her reserves in the way of tempers and tantrums. Mammy says you are going to kill 'her child wid dat pernickity fool of a horse yet.' 'Pernickity' is a great word with mammy. She has quite a vocabulary of her own, and, though I could not define any of them for the life of me, they are none the less among the most expressive I know. Dear old mammy!"

"You seem very fond of the old woman," said Gerald.

"Oh, of course. A mammy is a great institution. An outsider can scarcely understand how great."

"Oh, I can quite understand," said Gerald the sensitive, quickly, "if I am, as you say, an outsider. I've got an old nurse at home, very much the same sort of thing, I fancy. She coddled and spoilt me tremendously as a child, and she would give me her head for a football now if I wanted it. Poor old Dawks. She was in a great way when she found out that I was coming to America. She will be wondering what has become of me."

"Have you never written to tell her of your safe arrival?" asked Claudia.

"No, I never have."

Claudia's eyes dropped to her sewing.

"But I *will*," added Gerald, after looking at her for a moment. "I am an awfully selfish brute. I ought to have done so long ago."

Claudia smiled. "It does not seem an extravagant return for eight or ten years' entire devotion, does it?" she said.

"Oh, I say. That is rubbing it in, Miss Hyde ! said that I was a selfish brute just now, but I was really thinking myself rather a fine fellow. Now really feel ashamed of myself. I'll write off to Mr Elizabeth Dawkins this very night, and make it peace. She'll forgive me anything."

"An excellent reason for never giving her occasion to be so generous," said Claudia, with a kind look that set Gerald's hat twirling faster than ever. "Keith Keith! You'll fall! Come away, dear! Come here."

Thus appealed to, little Keith first peeped at the pair through a gap as of a missing tooth in the spik of the railing, and then joined them and clambered up into Gerald's lap, and laid his head against him with the confiding movement so irresistible in children.

"What are you going away for?" he asked.

"Because I must."

"Why don't you stay here always? You said you give me a colt and break it for me, no matter how hard it kicked. See here. When a horse kicks, you just go right up to it. — That's the way. He draws back like this, but he can't kick you, 'cause you ain't there; you are too close, don't you see? Joe says — he's blacksmith — that's the way he does. He said he shoe my colt for me for nothin' when I got him. He's a mighty nice man, Joe is. He says he can 'shoe anything on four legs.' I'm going to be a blacksmith when I'm a little older."

"You shall have the colt, never fear. A promise is a promise."

"When? To-morrow?"

"No. To-morrow is Sunday. Before long, perhaps. I'll not forget, if I am going away."

"But what's the use of going, anyway?" asked Keith.

"I can't say, I am sure. Would you like me to stay? You have n't asked me to, you know. Your cousin Claudia here has n't either. She has had enough of me, and more, too; she's tired of 'outsiders' and anxious to pickle you, or preserve you, one — I forget which she said she meant to do. On Monday morning, though, at a quarter to ten the big brass kettle will go on the stove, and she will pick you up like this (illustrating), and in you'll go head over heels, and for all your squeals, you'll never be heard of again in this world, my boy, *never*."

When Keith's laughter and outcries had somewhat subsided, Claudia said: —

"It hardly seemed worth while to try to alter a mind so bent upon departure, or fair to ask a gentleman to 'waste' more of his valuable time on a quiet country family, when there seemed no reasonable hope of repaying him for the sacrifice. All our to-morrows are sure to be as like our yesterdays as peas in a pod," said Claudia, with a laughing glance at Gerald.

"You see, she won't ask me. I can't get an invitation to stay, angle as I will," said Gerald to Keith. "Nobody wants me, and I must just take myself off."

"I want you: you shan't go away at all. You've got to stay, stay, *stay*!" cried Keith, thumping with his fist on Gerald's broad chest at each repetition of his invitation. "Must n't he stay, Mysie? Must n't he?"

"Well, if he *likes* to stay, dear, we should like it," said Claudia.

"Would you really?" asked Gerald, with a most British blush, and such an eager look that Claudia began rather formally: —

"If it makes no difference;" and then more frankly, "stay by all means, if you are not tired of us! We shall be delighted, and one week can't make much difference in your prospects."

"Thank you," said Gerald, after a moment, and the next carried Keith off into the house pick-a-back, talking to him and giving all his attention to the child.

But Claudia was entirely mistaken in supposing that a week would make no difference in Mr. Mildmay's prospects. It made all the difference.

For on Monday of that week, Gerald got a very foreign-looking letter, much directed and curiously stamped, as Claudia could not but observe when she gave it to him. Wholly destitute of a certain kind of curiosity, though, it was quite by accident that she presently looked up from her low seat at him perched in the window seat, to tell him that Butterworth's farm was advertised for sale in the day's paper. Her woman's eye instantly detected that something was wrong.

He was pale, with the peculiar pallor born of evil tidings, for one thing. The letter trembled as he read it with devouring haste. He then crushed it in his hand, and left the room quietly, leaving her full of speculation as to its contents. Dinner soon followed, however, and he came back looking much as usual even to her aroused interest. But the meal was a distinct failure in point of cheerfulness; they all felt it to be so, somehow, without knowing why.

Mrs. Blunt was suffering from neuralgia, Mr. Hyde was over-tired, the boys rather tiresome, but it was none of these that changed the atmosphere so entirely. The day was hot, but that was not it. It is curious how a party of people will sit down at the same board, day after day, and contrive to make each meal differ in some way from every other. And we have all seen and felt how such a party, composed of identically the same people, doing identically the same thing, can be affected by subtle, secret influences, electrical in their effect upon the company.

Gerald had received a shock that had half stunned

him, and though outwardly he seemed the same to every one but Claudia, who thought him grave and cold, was feeling a sudden sense of aloofness from them all — a sudden distaste to his surroundings — was regretting that he had accepted Claudia's invitation after all. Claudia, naturally, was wondering what had happened. The others were all sultry, to borrow a term from the clerk of the weather.

Almost the only diversion — the boys' laughter and talk — sounded silly, and proved unfortunate, for they began to talk of Butterworth's, to repeat the comments of some cousins upon the gentlemen there that were the reverse of flattering.

"I can't bear Englishmen any way," blurted out Charley between two dreadful mouthfuls; "and neither can Claudia."

On hearing this, Gerald's whole figure became for all the world as stiff as an Indian chief's in front of a tobacco-shop. Why had he stayed? Why had he spent six weeks among these strangers in this out of the way country-house, which seemed suddenly to take on a forlorn look of isolation and poverty? How shabby the carpet! What a darn in the cloth! How clear it was that Ada rouged! He talked very much as usual, but Claudia detected the change in his feeling, saw it in his manner, heard it in every word he uttered. He heard Mr. Hyde order Charley from the table in a low, stern voice.

"What *can* I say?" thought Claudia, but could find nothing, and was thankful when the meal was over, and an embarrassing situation with it.

Gerald now lit a cigar, and sat on the sofa in the hall in a state of intense irritation, clearly betrayed by his heavy frown, and the short, quick whiffs he omitted. The Diva Moneta is more than a match for Her Serene Highness Nicotina at any time, and when Venus de-



clines to have her rosy finger used any longer as a tobacco-stopper, matters are apt to be still further complicated. So annoyed did Gerald look that Claudia, reconnoitring from the other end of the long hall, had not the courage at first to speak to him. By the time his second cigar was nearly done, however, he looked a good deal more approachable, she decided, and she advanced work in hand toward him.

Gerald rose, promptly threw away what remained of it, and stood at attention in one of his own easy, gentlemanly attitudes, but with the stiffness by no means dispelled from his manner, so that it seemed more like a soldier's salute than the deferential and personal courtesy of bearing to which Claudia was accustomed. A woman is never so dull as not to recognize the difference in the two kinds of civility, and Claudia colored as she took her seat on the other end of the sofa, and he resumed his seat.

"I am afraid I am a nuisance. I have spoiled your smoke," she began.

"Not at all," protested Gerald, in a tone that was of the most perfunctory politeness.

"Oh! yes, I have, too. I know that quite well. The truth is that I have come to ask you to forgive Charley's rude speech. He had not the least intention of giving offense. He did not think —"

"Offense? I am afraid I don't understand. How, pray?"

"Oh! by what he said about disliking Englishmen."

"It is not of the least consequence, I assure you, Miss Hyde."

"So far as the opinion goes, I grant you." ("How haughty he looks," she thought.) "But I was thinking of his discourtesy. Boys of his age —"

"Are apt to blurt out the truth — exactly, I quite understand."

"But it was n't the truth. He has taken up a dislike to Mr. Hargreaves; something about a puppy, I have forgotten what; and he was generalizing magnificently and incautiously. That is all. As for me, I may have said something of the sort once. But that was long ago."

"Oh!" said Gerald, but though it sounds simple, it was a voluminous, three-volume English "Oh!" "That comes from some remote recess of reserve, where American women need not hope to penetrate," thought Claudia.

"Before I knew you," she added. "You see, except you, they are the only Englishmen I have ever known. And I had had ideals about England and all things English. We Virginians are proud of our pure English ancestry, and believe that all the best things we have came from the mother country. I had my enthusiasms—I believed in the Cavalier England of tradition, and my father's library, and my own imagination. And then I met the Butterworth colony, and I confess I was most woefully disappointed, or rather disillusioned. It was a dreadful tumble from the topmost pinnacle of a towering castle in the air. You must not mind my saying so. And then I met *you*. And you were quite different."

"I am quite as bad as they," said Gerald, partly from perversity, partly from a desire to defend them, partly from a memory of a certain experience in which he had placed himself on the same level.

"Like *them*? Do you really expect me to believe, Mr. Mildmay, that you are like Mr. Hargreaves? Or is it Mr. Wardour that you most resemble? I say nothing of Mr. Flanders. His conduct during your illness would atone for anything. Yes, I confess I was prejudiced—so would you have been. Mr. Hargreaves would sit up and elegantly 'chaff' my dear old

father and make fun of his liking for Crabbe, and ridicule him before me to his very face, under our own roof, where I had to endure it. The first time I saw you, I rather suspected you of doing the same thing, by the bye. Mr. Wardour has patronized us to any extent, and pities us, I really think, from the bottom of his heart for not being English, forgetting that we are quite content, more than content, proud to be just what we are — *Virginians*. Come, now, am I not entitled to a certain amount of prejudice? Especially as there will soon be none left if you stay with us much longer!"

There was no resisting the tone and smile with which Claudia said this; and by the time this eloquent special pleader had finished her speech, Gerald was again the Gerald of the morning.

"Yes; I think you are," said he, in his low, mellow tones, and she knew her case was won.

"And, now, may I say that I fear you had bad news this morning?"

"How did you find that out?"

"Hath not a woman eyes? Hath she not senses, wits, divinations? It *was* bad tidings, was it not? I was so sorry. I am so sorry."

"Thank you. I should say it was. About the worst I could have got!" replied Gerald.

"Don't tell me of it, unless you wish to, I beg! I only meant to express my sympathy, not to extort a confidence!"

"Well, it is simply that I have lost everything that I had in the world — every penny. The Styrian Steel and Iron Company, in which my money was invested, has failed."

"That is bad. I am mighty sorry! Was it a great sum?"

"No; a very small one, but all that I had left; therefore it amounts to a great deal."

"Is there no hope of your recovering it?"

"None whatever. It could not be sunk deeper in the bottom of the Atlantic."

"That is unfortunate," said Claudia, fixing on him a grave look. She then resumed her work, adding, "Still I am glad it is not more serious."

"You do not think it a serious situation to find one's self a beggar in a foreign country among entire strangers? I call it serious enough, I assure you! It will grow more and more so, I make no doubt. I can't believe it yet, though I know it is true. By Jove! I should say it was serious!"

"Undoubtedly. But there are so many things more so — death, disgrace, hopeless indebtedness even. It might have been so much worse. I hope I don't seem unsympathetic. Poverty is a real evil, when it is not a great blessing in disguise. I did not mean to make light of it. I know all about it. I have myself felt its full weight. Money is tragically inadequate sometimes; but alas! it is also hideously necessary. But, all the same, it is my deliberate conviction that it is the lightest of all the crosses laid upon us, when all is said and done, even for a woman. And you, a man, need not fear it, surely."

"But I am ruined, Miss Hyde! My prospects were anything but brilliant before, and now they are hopeless. If I confess the truth, I am quite miserable. I have not the least idea what to do, without a shilling to fall back upon," maintained Gerald honestly. "If I had known it was coming, I might have hedged a bit — at worst have let it find me in Italy, where pauperism is quite pleasant and picturesque. But America is not the country for *lazzaroni* at all, and I shall certainly starve, or go to jail, like some of our poor London devils, for stealing a loaf of bread from a baker."

"Not you! You will do nothing of the sort! You are young, strong, unmarried, highly educated. You have energy and pluck. You have a perfect talent for making friends." Gerald shook his head sadly here, and Claudia went on: "Yes, you have, too. Cousin Miles thinks you a genius, and you have simply enslaved auntie. Father says you are a delightful companion, and Keith informed me to-day that you were 'bully.' You will get on! You will make your way, mark my words. Situated as you are, you ought to ask nothing but a fair field and no favor. America is the country of the poor man. Poor men have made it what it is for the most part, and grown rich, many of them, in the process. Why should not you? Come! I predict that you will make a fortune, go to Congress, decline the Presidency with thanks, marry a Northern heiress, and live and die the most respectable and respected of men."

Gerald laughed. "You are a pleasant sort of prophet, I must say. Only we'll leave out the heiress, if you please."

"And don't you go saying that you are a perfect stranger in a foreign land, either. Virginia ought never to be a wholly foreign land to any Englishman. And you have friends, too, good friends."

"Where?" asked Gerald. "I don't know it, if I have," he added sadly.

"Why, *here*," said Claudia, in her sunniest tones. "Here's one to begin with."

She gave him her hand frankly as she spoke, and rose.

"You are very good," was on Gerald's tongue, and "How sweet you are!" in his heart and eyes. But they got no further. For, looking out, he caught sight of an ominous looking procession already this side of the hedge and approaching the door. He intercepted the view, —

"If you are going up to your room now, would you look in the hall and give Keith my umbrella? I'll wait here for it," he said, releasing her hand suddenly.

"With pleasure," replied Claudia, unsuspecting of any reason for obeying, but doing so at once. About half an hour later she heard a gentle knock at her door and went to it.

"Miss Hyde, your father would like to see you," said Gerald quietly. "You will find him on the sofa in the hall. He has met with an accident, and hurt his arm. Don't be alarmed. I have made him as comfortable as I can, and I am off for a doctor now. There is no great harm done, I think, but we may as well have a professional opinion."

## CHAPTER XI.

"Which softness' self is yet  
The stuff to hold fast where  
A steel chain snaps."

*Browning.*

"MAY I speak to you a moment?" asked Doctor Beale of Gerald as he drew on his gloves in the hall preparatory to leaving the house, looking about him as he spoke.

"With pleasure," said Gerald, though pleasure was the last emotion that he expected to derive from the interview, and led the way into the parlor.

"An unfortunate occurrence, this," said the doctor. "No, I won't sit down; I have n't time."

"What do you think of him?" asked Gerald anxiously.

"Well, that arm has to come off. And the sooner the better. I have n't my instruments, but I am going for them now. And I shall need some assistance. I can rely on your help, I suppose?" said the doctor.

"Is it as bad as *that*?" asked Gerald, much shocked.

"Yes. It is a mercy that vicious little mare of Eastman's did n't kick his brains out. But it's bad enough as it is. Still he has a good constitution — all the Hydes have — he'll live, I *think*, with care and good nursing. But it'll take both, for it's got to come off close to the shoulder, and at his age it is a pretty serious business, I can tell you. He has some internal injuries, too, and is badly bruised. You'd better tell Miss Claudia. There'll be a scene, of course. Get it

over by the time I get back, and have some warm water and old linen ready, won't you?"

"Can't *you* tell her?" asked Gerald weakly, most loth to stab a tender heart.

"No, you'd better do it; decidedly. I hate a scene. Anything but an hysterical woman, I say. She behaved very well when her mother died — very well, indeed; perhaps she'll do so now. If she *should* faint, you'll know what to do. And, for heaven's sake, get the other ladies out of the way and *keep* them there. Well, I'm off," replied the doctor, taking up his hat.

"This is dreadful!" began Gerald, but the doctor was already out of the door, and there was no shirking his responsibilities.

"Very sad thing. Don't forget the warm water!" called back the doctor from his buggy, smiling cheerfully as he drove off, leaving Gerald offended by his *sang-froid*.

But without justice. For every day was passed by the doctor in an atmosphere of sickness and sorrow, and to suppress his sympathies and control his emotions had become second-nature for so many years that he had forgotten what the first one was like — happily for his patients. Tragedy and trouble were the breath of his nostrils, his common air, and they had made him callous to the extent that a "stroke" oarsman's hand is, but only that far.

Gerald was still looking after him with a troubled face, when he heard Claudia's footsteps approaching. He started. His first cowardly impulse was to fly the field, but he turned and looked instead into her pale, grave face. His pity for her prompted the next movement. He took her hand. Before he could say a word, she saved him all preamble and spared herself all preparation (as our futile, stammering efforts to spare and bungling attempts to shield the soul that must know a



cruel truth is called) by saying, in a sort of appealing whisper, "Is he going to *die*?"

"No," vouched Gerald, looking at her with infinite kindness, and speaking with infinite gentleness. "But his right arm has to be taken off."

"O my God!" cried Claudia with the instinctive, anguished cry of the creature to its Creator — the cry that goes up from the depths of every great fear and grief. She sank down on the steps at his feet, and laid her head against one of the pillars, her eyes closed, her breast heaved convulsively, and Gerald, regarding her intently, was at his wits' end. Should he summon assistance? Should he go in search of restoratives? Should he quietly wait until she came to herself? He had an instinctive sense that she would be annoyed by the first; he saw that she had not fainted, and therefore had no need of the second. He sat down, therefore, by her quite quietly and waited, saying very little, fanning her with his hat, taking her cold hand, and rubbing it between his palms gently, in his pity and sympathy. His eyes never left her face.

That cry had reached the immortal dwelling in the tent of a day, the secret place to which the love that is God and the God that is love alone ever penetrates. His whole being was flooded with tenderness as he bent over her and heard the panting sigh that was a sob suppressed, "O father! *father!*" and saw her throw her arms up over her head, and turn away from him in the abandonment of profound desolation. At last the low, earnest tones of his voice, charged with meaning and feeling, made their way to her. She became conscious that he was urging her to go to her own room and lie down, and leave everything to him; he would do all that was necessary; she might trust him; nothing should be forgotten or neglected. An electric battery could not have aroused her more com-

pletely. She opened her eyes, and sat up; a spot of crimson flamed into her cheeks.

"*Leave father?*" she cried. "What is to be done? Tell me, quick! I have left him too long already. I must go to him."

She rose to her feet, and Gerald had the comprehension and tact to understand and aid her. He told her what was needed as they walked in together.

"Sit here a moment," he said, halting by the old sofa. "You have an ordeal before you, Miss Hyde, and I am going to give you something that will help you to meet it."

Before she could remonstrate he had dashed up to his room, and in a moment was back with a glass, which he put in her hand. "My doctor in Egypt gave it to me once, and it is a wonderful sedative and cordial combined. Drink it, I beg. Drink it," he urged; and seeing that she hesitated and drew back, added, "for your father's sake."

Thus adjured, Claudia did drink it, her sweet lips all a tremble.

"Now," said Gerald, "you will find you can do anything that may be necessary. Get what the doctor will need, and give what orders you think proper. And remember that we are going through this *together*."

Claudia was off like an arrow from a bow at once, and within the next hour made every preparation imaginable for what was to come. She first went to her father. She got Mrs. Blunt off for a visit to Cousin Miles, ignorant of what had happened and was to happen. She sent the boys *en masse* to some other cousins. She got into a soft, noiseless gown, and with mammy's aid got together everything that could possibly be required.

She shut herself up in her room for a few minutes,

and came out of it with such a look of high resolution and calm purpose on her face that Gerald, meeting her, was quite awed by it, seeing in it the reflection of the light and strength she had been seeking. The doctor returned, bringing two other physicians, and the deed was done. None of them were more collected and ready for every emergency than Claudia. It was she who told her father what had to be done. She held his hand, and wiped away the dews of anguish from his forehead, and bent over him like a pitying angel all during the operation — at least Gerald thought so as he watched her. She seemed all eye and ear. She was very helpful to the doctors, low of voice, light of step, swift to understand, and as still as a statue except for a shiver that no one but Gerald noticed when the peculiar grating sound of the saw struck upon her ear. She gave Gerald a look then that he never forgot, any more than she did the look he gave her in return.

When it was all over, one of the doctors mounted guard and Gerald drew Claudia outside. By this time she was as white as her father, and was trembling violently in every limb, completely unnerved for the time being. And it was this moment of all others that Ada chose to follow them and to ply her sister with questions. "How is he, Claudia? Did he bleed much? Tell me all about it. I don't see why *I* was n't allowed to be with him. I think you might have come out before this and let *me* know about it. I've been waiting and waiting in the dining-room for hours, and you might be more considerate, I think," she peevishly complained.

"Take her away. Don't let her talk to me," said Claudia's eyes, making an imploring appeal to Gerald, who had guided her to the old bench on the back porch. And Gerald got Ada away by fair means, though it is to be feared that his impulse was to do so

by foul. He also met Cousin Helen full of anxiety, and relieved her mind; likewise mammy's and Edmund's. He artfully invented errands for them all. He bethought him of Uncle Beverly, and went in search of him. He found him in the pantry wrapped in lofty gloom and utter disapproval. He was greeted with: "What 's all dis 'bout Mars' Addison? *I'se* not been consulted. *I'se* not been ~~tole~~ nuffin 'bout it! Ain't Mars' Addison needin' *me*? He ain't never been sick in all his born days widout *me*. He always say 'Wha's Beverly?' first thing. 'T ain't by no wish of Mars' Addison's dat *I'se* secluded from dat room, dat's *shore*."

"Come, come, Uncle Beverly, Miss Hyde told you all about it; you were just at the door, you know, and if anybody had been needed you would have been called in. But there were so many doctors that we were not allowed to do anything for him. The doctor and Miss Hyde would like you to sit with him now, though, and keep everybody else out. But of course he must be kept perfectly quiet," said Gerald.

"*I'se* gwine take charge," replied Uncle Beverly, with a nod; "I was give to Mars' Addison when I was born, to be his body servant, and I promised ole mistis I'd always take care of him, on her dying bed. She left him to me; and I'm gwine save my word. And *I* knows what to do. But ~~dey~~ ain't *cornsulted* me."

"*Who* has n't consulted you?" asked Gerald, minded to soothe his wounded dignity and generally outraged feelings, but wholly unprepared for the reply, because wholly ignorant of Uncle Beverly's race and tribe.

"Dem *doctors*. *Da's* who! Cuttin' off Mars' Addison's arm widout saying 'punkins' to me! If master and ole mistis was alive, 't would n't er been

'lowed, dat it would n't. But dee worl' done turned upside down dese days, and *nuffin* ain't right."

Gerald was staggered completely by this speech.

"And people wha' don't belong to our family in dere, and *me* secluded!" Uncle Beverly continued, with a vicious flap of his tea-towel that spoke volumes, or would have done so to the initiated.

"Oh! I see. But I was n't asked to be there. I invited myself. I wanted to see the operation," explained Gerald with his winning smile. "You would have done much better in my place. You would have been really useful."

"If Miss Cläudia wants me to go and take charge of Mars' Addison, it's her place to come speak to me *herself*, and not be sendin' me no messages. I don't *take* no orders fum *dem doctors*, I ain't got nothin' to do wid dee whole caboodle. And company don't give no orders. Miss Claudia knows better'n dat. She's quality, and been fotch up by me and her mammy, and lived wid quality like us all her born days," grumbled Uncle Beverly, in his wrath and jealousy.

"Very well; I will tell her what you say," said Gerald, half amused, half indignant, wholly eager to get back to Claudia. He found her where he had left her, stood by her for awhile without a word, and then got Cousin Helen's vinaigrette for her, saying kindly, "Some whiffs of sal volatile will do you good. You behaved nobly. It is all well over. Try to put it out of your mind now, Miss Hyde."

"I can't! I never shall forget it," exclaimed Claudia passionately, and now at last came the tears in a torrent.

"That's right, cry away, Miss Hyde. It will be a relief. Don't mind me. There! there!" said Gerald. He felt for the moment as though she were a child somehow, and, when she could n't find her handkerchief, got out his and wiped away the tears himself off

one cheek before giving it to her. When she became calmer he offered her his arm. "Come! walk up and down with me awhile; the air will do you good, and I'll not disturb you with my talk," he urged. And he was right.

Claudia's deep sighs became gradually less and less frequent, and except for an occasional "You feel better, do you not?" or an assuring "That's right. If you did n't sigh, you would suffocate," there was a most healing silence between them.

When a faint pink had taken the place of her extraordinary pallor, he said to her, "Go lie down, now, for a couple of hours. I will ask mammy to take you some food, and I shall stay with your father until you come back. You must husband your strength—you will need it, Miss Hyde. Do be obedient."

And then and there Claudia, who had all her life been thinking for others, and caring for others as the merest matter of course, as very unselfish women do, learned what God meant a man to be to a woman, what a prop and stay, what a comfort and blessing; learned what a strong, encompassing, protecting power a good man can be, and how sweet it is for a woman to have such a one to lean on in the day of trouble and darkness and distress.

And in the weeks that followed, Claudia came more and more to rely on Gerald's calm judgment, quiet cheerfulness, coolness in danger; even his British phlegm was often invaluable to her, when she got nervous and fanciful about her patient—their patient. Once when no doctor was about, or within five miles for that matter, and Mr. Hyde seemed to be sinking, he was brought through the crisis by Gerald's judicious use of French brandy. He had a second "queer turn" that was anything but strange if we remember his condition, and Gerald in his room heard Claudia calling

him in tones of the most acute distress one night, and going out found her standing in the hall, candle in hand.

"What is it?" he asked, alert but not excited.

"Come! come! do something, quick! he is looking so strange — Oh! do you think he can be going to *die*?" asked Claudia, rubbing her forehead with one hand as if trying to collect her senses. "I can't think."

"Not a bit of it. He may have fainted, though," protested Gerald confidently, and going back with her he was again able to tide over the new danger and bridge the stream for Mr. Hyde, and had his heart warmed by Claudia's deep sigh, and, "Oh! what *should* I have done without you? I never could have borne it in the world! I have never had anybody to depend upon before. They have all leaned on me."

Many an hour and day did they spend together in that room, memorable hours and days which neither of them will ever forget. Mammy was there usually, too, very helpful when awake and very apt to doze off when idle; Uncle Beverly sometimes, as solemn and glum as possible, and not to be trifled with, resenting everything that seemed to reflect upon him in his capacity of chief nurse, every attempt to approach Mr. Hyde through any other channel. Cousin Helen would sit there, with her endless white work and placid commonplaces for hours at a stretch.

But all the same, there were many hours in which they were alone. Gerald became very familiar with Claudia's pure, tender profile as she sat near the table in the window, her eyes bent upon her tambour frame. He sketched it furtively on his cuffs, when he was supposed to be deep in his book, across the room, and then forgot that he had done so. And mammy, coming upon it in the wash-tub the week following, had her deepest suspicions aroused. And they had many a talk, carried on in low tones with many an interrup-

tion; surface talk at first about surface matters, but gradually widening and deepening until it extended over all their past lives, the present, the future. It embraced their views upon all the vital questions that have to be settled before two people can become friends, and went down to the very roots of things, ideals, standards, ambitions, hopes, desires. In a few weeks they knew each other better than they would have done in as many years of ordinary social intercourse.

Gerald, who had always believed himself to be a reserved man, and was one, soon found himself telling Claudia all about his relations with his uncle, his loss of fortune, his most secret opinions and most inveterate prejudices, his plans and purposes, his thoughts and views. It is as difficult not to confide in some people as it is impossible to unbosom ourselves to others. Gerald did not mean to open the door of the citadel, but the key fitted in the ward.

There were cobwebs there which this fair turnkey brushed gently away.

There were many things to enjoy, for his life had been varied and interesting, hers narrow and circumscribed, and she enjoyed them heartily, with fine natural taste and perfect natural refinement. There were things that she could not admire or approve, and her silence was a louder reproof than any words; her gentle comments when she felt obliged to speak carried more weight than the most withering denunciations could have done.

"Yes, I understand that you have had an injustice done you, but do not allow yourself to feel angry with your uncle, or cherish unkind thoughts of him. There is nothing so bitter as feeling bitter. He had a moral as well as legal right to marry if he wished to do so, and if you have something to forgive—well, it is agreed by all who have tried it that it is sweeter in



proportion to the greatness of the injury received. Forgive him fully, freely, and you will be at peace."

"I don't think I can. I don't suppose he is in the least penitent, or at all cares for it, for one thing. And to write to me through his solicitor!" said Gerald, whose *amour propre* and feelings had been grievously wounded by this.

"Try. It is very hard to do, I know, but so is everything that is worth doing. Remember all his goodness to you when you were a child. No after unkindness ought to blot that out," urged Claudia, when Gerald opened his heart, and told her of his uncle's conduct.

"But I have been bred a Sybarite and Epicurean, and then thrown out here to starve. And I have got used to my gold spoon, I am ashamed to say."

"You can eat just as well with a pewter one, believe me."

"I have been thrown into the Atlantic without a cork jacket," persisted Gerald, smiling.

"You will swim all the better as soon as you have learned the trick."

"Possibly; unless I sink," added Gerald. "There never was such luck! If I were to make a million over here, I should still have lost so much. You see, I would rather own 'The Towers' than be king of England. I am awfully fond of the old place. And you won't mind my saying that I feel out of my element over here? And I can't help feeling very sore about the heart. How am I to get what is called 'suitable employment,' I should like to know, when I don't suit any employment, and don't know of any employment that would suit me? We will waive the question of a million, for the present. I don't think it manly of me to come complaining and pulling a long face like this, but I confess that I seem to myself to

have brought up against a stone wall. I am staring at it respectfully to see whether I can get over it or dig through it; but so far as I can see, it is of brass, and offers no sort of foothold. I am perfectly willing to do anything, but I can't find anything to do!"

"But you will in time. You must not lose heart," said Claudia.

"I hate to be beat, and I shall make the best fight I can. Luck is not on my side, evidently, but if pluck can win the day, I shall hope to escape the Scylla of the county almshouse, and to avoid the Charybdis of the county jail. After all, bread for one ought to be easy to gain anywhere, and I am not likely to need more," said Gerald sadly. "I beg your pardon for troubling *you* with all this."

"I feel troubled *for* you, but not *by* you," said Claudia.

"You are very good."

"Not at all. I am not 'wondrous kind,' but I ought to have some 'fellow feeling' for you, for I, too, am poor," said Claudia. "There's father stirring! I must go and dress his arm."

This conversation had taken place one morning while Mr. Hyde was asleep. Claudia had learned from the doctor how to dress a wound, and would let no one else do this for her father, and Gerald sat still in his corner watching her.

"A man might well be willing to lose both arms to be so loved by such a woman," he thought. "She is quite right. I will write to my uncle some day, though I have vowed fifty times that I never would again. I'll not tell him of my condition, though."

He rose and looked out of the window. The sight of the boys playing leap-frog on the lawn below, or rather the green space that did duty for a lawn, confirmed and strengthened his resolution. "He taught

me leap-frog. He was awfully fond of me in those days. Poor old fellow! Saddled with a vulgar wife — getting on for an old man, too. I'll write *to-day*," mused Gerald, and write he did. And, of course, having written, he told Claudia what he had done, and won an approving smile.

"You will not regret it," she said, and said no more.

One of Claudia's great gifts was knowing when to speak and when to be silent.

What the doctor had called "the Hyde constitution" stood the great strain put upon it remarkably well, and Mr. Hyde was before long able to relieve the worst fears of those who best loved him. He bore his great loss, and the suffering consequent upon it, with a courage which Gerald called Spartan, but which was really of a far higher order — Christian.

And he had no lack of nurses. Mr. Wardour came over with the greatest promptness and offered his services, saying that he knew "how hard it was to get a really good nurse in these outlandish parts." Cousin Miles, too, and Flanders, and about a dozen cousins asked to come over and take up their abode at the "Bowers;" but Mr. Hyde and his household alike preferred to decline the proffered kindness. The result was that the burden was about equally divided between Gerald and Claudia. Together they entered the valley of the great shadow; together brought back with tender care and divine joy a human soul. The angel bearing the sword of the Lord, "whose countenance is like lightning, and whose salutation is Peace!" the angel "whose name is neither Life nor Death, but Love," hovered so near that it often seemed as though only a breath, a flicker of earthly life and light, remained.

By the time that august presence had been removed,

Claudia and Gerald knew each other, as related souls subjected to a supreme test do. "How good he has been to father. As gentle as a woman, and such a *gentleman!*" thought Claudia.

"She is a true, noble woman," thought Gerald.

There had been no filial poses for his benefit, he knew; no affectations or absurdities of any kind, no self-consciousness. She was herself, Claudia, Mr. Hyde's daughter, and as he saw her ministering so lovingly, talking so cheerfully, bearing herself so bravely, outwardly, and slipping away to hide her tears, only to come back again as bright as the sun, full of thoughtfulness, exquisite in tact, overflowing with unaffected tenderness, he confessed to himself that here was a woman to be admired, loved, revered, a reality that far outshone the ideal he had cherished so long, and sought far and wide. It was an intense satisfaction to find that his instincts had not deceived him. It made everything else seem true and beautiful. New truth, new beauty, began to flow in upon him with it, new light, new life—a life full of meaning, dignity, value, beauty. The bit of honeysuckle in his coat, pulled by himself from the vine that framed Claudia's window, had a penetrating sweetness greater than all the perfumes of Araby the Blest, as he bent to catch it. The birds in the "Bower" garden had not the plumage, but sang the songs of Paradise; two doves, describing a circle on the roof of the porch as he looked up, preached of purity and innocence, as the whole bench of bishops could not have done. The world was a melody, and he had just caught the tune, the refrain being always—"How good she is! How sweet she is! How noble and gentle! How feminine, and altogether adorable!"

After a long night of watching he would slip quietly downstairs in the chill dawn, and out into Claudia's

garden, that he might revel in thoughts of her, and the place lent itself to his reverie, for everything there spoke of her. The dew of every beautiful new birth is "of the womb of the morning," and the freshness and stillness about him were most grateful. The auroral flush of the eastern sky as seen from the cliff seemed to come from a central sun of truth and beauty within him, and all the wakening world was full of delicate spiritual suggestion, symbolic joy, exquisite promise.

## CHAPTER XII.

"Have I found her? O! rich finding!"

*Pilkington's Madrigals.*

"You two seem to have become great friends," remarked Mr. Hyde from his bed one morning, as if he had just perceived the fact, as he had.

"Yes, we have, daddy," confessed Claudia frankly. "And a good friend has Mr. Mildmay been to us both in all this. I can give him the very highest testimonials when he leaves us. And I am, as he knows, most grateful."

"I've done nothing," protested Gerald. "But I am honored in being numbered among Miss Hyde's friends. They must be very numerous. I am quite ready, though, to take my proper place at the foot of the list."

He half expected to be contradicted, but Claudia left him there, metaphorically, and busied herself about her father, saying, "I have not many friends. I suppose no one has."

"I think it is Plato who says that 'God is ever drawing like to like,' and that it is He who gives to those whom He intends should be friends letters of introduction. It is a pretty conceit," remarked Mr. Hyde, enunciating a generality.

"I should say it was quite true, sir," said Gerald. "I know very little about it, however. Like your daughter, I have few friends, though I have an army of intimate acquaintances. In my more bitter and

misanthropic moods, I have thought that I had none. And it is doubtless my own fault that I have not made more."

"I cannot think that," replied Mr. Hyde. "But you tell me you have been very much of a rolling stone; and friendship is a moss — a slow, quiet growth, based on many things — the elemental one & sense of ideal beauty and truth, I should say. And I would have you remember, my boy! the Friend of Friends, if I may say so. I trust that you have kept your belief in God, and respect for Christianity, in this period, prolific of fools denying the existence of the Allwise and the Almighty, and of so-called wise who 'darken counsel by words without understanding'?"

"I think I may say that, sir, though my faith in a great many people and things has received some terrible shocks," said Gerald gravely. "And I make no pretension to being a religious man."

"You do well," said Mr. Hyde. "In nothing is pretense so offensive. But you would do better to *be* what Pharisees affect, in my judgment; and I think that I speak with the authority of saints and sages, as well as from the experience of an old man who has known many sorrows and losses, cares and afflictions, including this last blow *ab intra*, but who can gratefully say, with David, that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life."

"The fact that you feel as you do is good proof of the truth of what you say, sir," said Gerald, affected by this touching declaration of faith, and the tremulous tone in Mr. Hyde's voice.

"Do you know father means to sit up for awhile this morning? Isn't that grand?" said Claudia, seeing that it was clouding up for rain. "He has been shaved and dressed, and is only waiting for you to lift

him into his chair, and there is Uncle Beverly now, waiting to help you."

Gerald, who had rejoiced with Claudia over every stage of her father's convalescence — the day that he looked "natural," the day he had no fever, the day he ate a whole bowl of soup, — exclaimed: —

"No! Really?" and, advancing, put his arms about Mr. Hyde, and was about to lift him out of bed, when Uncle Beverly solemnly advanced and interfered.

"'Scuse me, sah, but *dat* ain't dee way! Holp him up on your shoulders like dis." With this Uncle Beverly turned his own back, and, skillfully catching his master round the waist, said, "I ain't gwine drap you. Don't you be afeard, Mars' Addison, *I'se* got you;" and added over his shoulder to Gerald, "you can take his *legs*," as if indicating the proper place for usurping Britons, and vindicating his own rights, and led off.

Gerald and Claudia exchanged glances, but did not dare to laugh for fear of giving mortal offense.

"You left your tobacco downstairs, sah," remarked Uncle Beverly, when Mr. Hyde was safely settled and Claudia had tucked the rugs about him. At this Gerald coughed, and Claudia hastily retreated.

"I am no enemy of nicotina, if you would care to smoke, Mr. Mildmay. Beverly, go down and send Pontius up with Mr. Mildmay's tobacco. I have no further need of you at present," commanded Mr. Hyde; and if any artist could have caught the expression of Uncle Beverly's whole figure as he left the room, tray in hand, he might have reasonably counted on fame and fortune.

"Uncle Beverly is consumed with jealousy of Mr. Mildmay, father," said Claudia, by way of explanation, when she had surprised herself by actually joining Ger-



ald in a hearty laugh. "He has been inventing ways of getting rid of him constantly, all during your illness, and we are amused by his ingenuity. He is never impertinent, either. He is almost as jealous of me, and tells me every day that he 'nussed' you before I was born. And as for the doctor, he is rabidly opposed to everything he does and has done."

"You should have seen *my* interview with Uncle Beverly in the pantry the day your father was hurt," said Gerald to Claudia; and related what had happened, much to the amusement both of father and daughter.

"A surly temper, but a faithful heart that far outweighs the infirmities to which we are all subject. I am most sincerely attached to Beverly, and so used to his tyranny that I should not know what to do with a less despotic valet. I think I should be like the aged prisoner, who, being turned out of the Bastille, begged to be put in again, if I were deprived of the support which it has always afforded me to be owned by Beverly," said Mr. Hyde. "I never forget, either, that when our great upheaval was an accomplished fact I saw one day every servant that I had file out from the quarters; and as they passed me sitting on the porch, the foolish creatures thought to mock me by calling out, 'Good-evening, *Mr. Hyde*,' with salutations of mock respect. But when I looked around, there was Beverly behind my chair, far more grieved and infinitely more insulted than I.

"'Don't you mind dem fool niggers, master. *I'se* here, and *I'se* gwine *stay* wid you, and *work* for you and *belong* to you, as long as I live,' the dear old fellow said; 'I'm 'shamed 'er being black, when I look at 'em streakin' through dat gate like a mad bull was after 'em; running away from a good home, and a kind friend, I tole 'em, and never saying thank-y.' And then he shook his fist at the retreating figures.

'I'se a nigger, too,' he called out. 'But I got a *white* heart. Go 'long and work till you drop, and steal and go to jail, but don't you come back here! We don' want no skunks wid *us*!' I never saw him so excited before or since. I did not blame them; it was perfectly natural; but it remains a great grievance with Beverly to this day.

"Now, daughter Claudia, come pin up this useless sleeve for me. To think of my going safely through twenty pitched battles, only to be ignominiously maimed for life by a fractious colt. Well, '*Delenda est Carthago*,' " Mr. Hyde concluded, his eyes very moist, though his tone was cheerful.

"The ungrateful beggars!" exclaimed Gerald, much interested in this recital. "Shall I go on reading Macaulay to you?"

"Macaulay? Macaulay? What should you say to a little *Crabbe*, just for a change? He is my Magnus Apollo," replied Mr. Hyde.

"You've no right to contend for republics as you do, if you say that, sir. There was never a ranker Tory," said Gerald, sitting down on the foot of the bed in one of his graceful, gentlemanly attitudes. "I've not got my batteries in position yet, but I hope to drive you out of that position yet, and show you that a limited monarchy is the thing."

"Ah! You'll never convince me that ours is not the ideal form of government. All human institutions are fallible, but the men who established this Republic were wiser than they knew, even, as the glorious result has proved," said Mr. Hyde, while Claudia tucked his wraps about him, and lent a listening ear and a bright face to the little discussion.

"Lycurgus and Solon established republics, for that matter, but, as Heine points out, made off for foreign parts immediately. And Moses gave one, but never set foot in it," urged Gerald.

"But only because he had forfeited the privilege!" exclaimed Mr. Hyde, sitting up in his eagerness to get the better of his adversary.

"You have me there, sir!" cried Gerald, laughing and left the room.

"A charming young fellow," said Mr. Hyde. "Very personable, too. And so companionable. I is not often that a man of my age finds a companion in another so much his junior."

"You like him, then, father?" asked Claudia, who had retired to the distant window of the room where the light was dimmed by the overshadowing front portico, and was making a sunshine in a shady place.

"I do, indeed. I wish I could at all hope to repay him for his thoughtful consideration for me. What are his prospects? His plans? Do you know, Claudia? He is just the man whom I should like to manage the farm: after I am fully recovered I shall not be able to engage in active agricultural supervision and at present I am utterly useless — at a season, to when it is highly important to have some intelligent and trustworthy gentleman to attend to these matters. It is useless to think of him, though," said Mr. Hyde. "I am not in a position to offer him any emolument commensurate with his rank and abilities. The five dollars a month is all that I can afford, and it would be an insult to offer him that, though I have understood him to say that his position at Mr. Burworth's is the reverse of satisfactory in every respect. I must look about for some one at once, with Mr. assistance."

"I would n't have you offer it for the father," said Claudia, and as she spoke Gerald appeared at the door, and asked to come in, holding his hand a bunch of letters.

He drew up a chair near Claudia.

"Are you quite comfortable? I have something to show you. I have been advertising myself as shamelessly as though I were a patent medicine, and answering all the advertisements I could find," he said. "See here! Here's a man who wants me to prepare two deaf and dumb boys for college; and a man who is going to India and wants me to teach him Hindustani in twenty lessons for fifty dollars; and a lady who wants me to go to California at my own expense and sketch her three daughters in sepia; and a Professor Wilkins, who wants a young man to dance with his advanced pupils at fifteen dollars a month and board! Read them all, Miss Hyde, if it will not bore you. They are precious specimens! It's a mad world, my masters, as I am finding out. Why don't you congratulate me on my brilliant prospects?"

"I will when they appear above the horizon. They are below it still," said Claudia, threading her needle.

"I should say they were!" exclaimed Gerald in a disgusted tone. "I shall advertise for a place as groom or ostler. I do know something about horses. I *must* find something to do. If I were in Spain I might turn gentleman-*toreador* like Mazzantini."

"And who is Mazzantini?" asked Claudia.

"A gentleman by birth who has taken to bull-fighting, and a splendid-looking fellow. He has the face and figure of a Grecian athlete. All the women go mad about him. He makes a cool 12,000*l.* a year, and one of his costumes cost 5,000*l.* He had the next room to mine when I was at Seville during the *Santa Semana* two years ago, and I met him. He plays the piano remarkably well, and speaks several languages. You would be fascinated by him, Miss Hyde."

"I doubt it; but I like to hear about him. Did you see him fight?"

"Yes, I went on Easter-day —" began Gerald.

"On Easter-day?" exclaimed Claudia, looking up suddenly.

"Easter-day, if I must tell the truth," said Gerald, reddening. "It is *the* day of the year in Seville. You should have heard the fashionable audience scream and yell when Mazzantini, looking for all the world like a Roman gladiator, stepped in front of the infuriated bull and with his *esparto* gave him his *coup de grâce*. It was the neatest thing I ever saw. But it is a brutal, beastly business. I cheered him, too. But I'll never go to another. Twenty-one horses and six bulls slaughtered in two hours! Fancy! The audience was a great sight—20,000 people; but very few women, I am glad to say."

"I marvel that there were any."

"I can't fancy you there for a moment," said Gerald; and added quickly, "the church procession and ceremonials would have interested you. Spain is more Catholic than the Pope himself. They began at four in the morning on Good Friday, and the great one of the day took four hours to pass. Such a curious, mediæval survival it was, too—all the scenes of the Passion, the figures carved and painted and set on long litters covered with a velvet canopy concealing the men who bore it. The noiseless movement, the blaze of wax lights, the profusion of white flowers, the priests, acolytes, crosses, banners, bands, and hundreds of masked penitents bearing torches (a remnant of the Inquisition), made an impressive sight as they filed into the great Cathedral—the most Spanish sight in Spain. I wish I could show you that Cathedral and the superb *giralda* built by those beggars the Moors in 1100, and still perfect—beautiful."

"And I wish I could see them. I would rather see the Alhambra than anything in Europe, I think,

thanks to Washington Irving, who so inflamed my mind on the subject that I used to make one of my own at the base of the cliffs when I was a child, and had my dolls dressed as Moors doing all sorts of things. Poor Boabdil is upstairs now, somewhere, in the garret in very reduced circumstances. Say no more about them, or I shall be growing discontented," said Claudia, shaking out her work and scattering her spools and bobbins far and wide.

"Tangier is the spot for you," replied Gerald, as he dropped down in search of them. "The old Moorish gates, mosques, and archways, and all that, would delight you. And people of as many colors and styles as you have silks, there. I did a lot of sketching while I was there. And the place bristled with artists—swagger fellows who exhibit every year, and a pleasant set of young fellows who had their spurs to win, of whom I saw a great deal, and with whom I rode and hunted wild boar. Very good sport it was, too. I can't find that big reel of yours. Where has it gone?"

"Dear me! How devoted you look! Are you at Claudia's feet already?" said Ada, sweeping into the room just then in her usual limp and languid fashion, and further adorning this odious speech with what she meant to be an arch smile.

Up jumped Gerald off his knees, very flushed, doubtless by his stooping posture only, and stood like a Prussian soldier at "attention!" Having buttoned the top button of his coat, and given his chest a pat, he said stiffly:—

"Miss Hyde dropped her working things and I was looking for them. Will you have my chair?" He glanced at Claudia, who had assumed that increased dignity that the sensible and sensitive members of a family are apt to wear when the foolish or ill-bred ones

are betraying temper, colossal conceit, ignorance, or indiscretion.

"Mr. Mildmay was telling me of Tangier. Did you want me?" she asked. Family pride, loyalty, repressed her intense annoyance, he could see, and respected her but the more.

"Oh! do tell *me* all about it, too. What *were* you saying?" gushed Ada.

"Only that it was a pleasant place to spend a few weeks in," replied Gerald, still standing.

"Well, if that is all, I may as well go. Claudia, I want your scissors; I am doing over my green silk. And where are those fashion-plates?" said Ada pettishly; and being told that they were downstairs, she slowly departed. The great occupation of Ada's life was the continual remodeling of her few gowns. The green one, as especially becoming in color, was always either just about to be done, in process of doing, or just finished.

Gerald still stood. He had not recovered his ease and composure. He felt inclined to "bolt," as he would have said; he had received a rude shock. A new-born passion dragged out and thrust under a powerful lime-light by an unfriendly hand wraps itself in anything it can find that will protect it; so now Gerald, not wishing his wish to be suspected, leaned a hand on his chair, and talked in a highly artificial strain, as impersonal as a mathematical problem, of art among the Moors, with a sort of levity, too, that Claudia had never seen in him. But as her quietness of person and manner, her composed questions and diligence took effect, he first put a knee down on the chair, then slipped into it, then drew it up, and was again himself — and hers. "If you would care to see them, I will get out my sketches of Lisbon, Cintra, and Tangier to-morrow. I'll get them now," he said. He was

off and back again in a flash. "Here is my Othello — only his name was Achmed — in his *gelab*. And here is Tangier. It is a white little town, rising terrace above terrace on the slope of a hill looking across to the mountains of Spain. One can see Gibraltar distinctly on a clear day. See this arch: from Christmas to June it is an enchanted and an enchanting spot."

Claudia, much interested, looked them over with him.

"Pray keep the mosque, if you like it," said he at last. "It is n't bad for me — though not worthy to offer you. I'll touch it up a bit first, and then mount it for you."

"It is charming, but — I hardly like —" began Claudia.

"Very well. Buy it of me. I only ask a thousand pounds," said Gerald quickly. "I want to make an honest living."

"And I have n't as many pennies," said Claudia, smiling.

"Then you'll have to humble your haughty spirit, Miss Hyde, and lay yourself under the tremendous obligation, and I shall have to get my bread in some other way. It does seem hard that, with every willingness to work, I can find nothing to do. I used to think that I was a match for the world, but that illusion, too, has departed. I am of no use to myself or anybody else, so far as I can see," said Gerald, laying his sketch on the table near Claudia.

"Thank you. I like having it," said she, and gave him a receipt in full in the shape of a grateful glance. "As to work, it is a severe pinch, that — a miserable thing — to be willing to work and not be able to find it. I was so unhappy before this inspiration came to me," said Claudia, indicating her work. "It is a revival of some old English tambour-work that we had in the



family, done by my great-grandmother. I picked out a bit of it and learned the stitches, and now I am what you would call 'a swell' at it. I sell it in Boston, am fairly well paid for it, and wouldn't be without the money for the world. Why do you look shocked?"

"Because I feel so," said Gerald simply.

"Have n't I as good a right to earn a living as you?" asked Claudia. "Not that I do. It is only that the farm yields very little, and when Keith came he had to be clothed — and I do believe that child ate his shoes; they were in holes in two weeks — it was dreadful." She smiled as she spoke, but, seeing Gerald's grave face, added, "You look shocked still."

"No, only pained — one never wishes to see a woman work, you know," explained Gerald, coloring.

"Do I look like a victim, a martyr?" asked Claudia. "Sorrows I have known, and cares a many, but my work is a pleasure, a solace. And money that one has earned by good, honest, painstaking labor is twice blessed, like the quality of mercy — in the earning and the spending. Our Southern men have always had the same feeling, and for that reason I have never told father about my little enterprise. He has fallen asleep, you see — speak low. It would wound him, I am sure. You see he began in the coach, and has come down gradually and gracefully to the cat of poverty. I am beginning with the Whittington cat, and working up to the coach. I don't mind it. I am used to it. I consider that I am rapidly becoming a capitalist. I can now give a book or a bouquet of my own earning to a friend sometimes, and that is luxury, if you like. I'll tell you a secret. Auntie makes bonbon boxes when she shuts herself up in her room in the mornings; and Edmund copies for a law firm in Washington. You have come to the right place. You will soon find something, and will belong to the

working classes yourself. And though it sounds a hardship, you will not find it so. The idle rich are the only people in the world that I pity."

"Mysie! Mysie! I've come home, and I'm never going away again. I rode Cousin Miles's 'Spitfire' over, and she tried to kick me off, but I jerked up her head, so she could n't do a thing. He's downstairs. How's my pig?" exclaimed Keith, dashing into the room.

"How's mine?" asked Claudia laughingly, pinching two cheeks that were anything but clean, and kissing him heartily. "Go speak to father—but first, here's Mr. Mildmay," she added; and this done, "Now come along with me, I have a private and particular engagement with you. But I'm right glad to have my boy back again, dirty or clean." With this, she took him by the hand, and trotted him off. Gerald, smiling and content, leaned back in his chair for a few minutes, and then suddenly proposed to Mr. Hyde a game of chess.

It was next morning that Mr. Hyde called to him as he left his room, and said to him, "May I ask if you are still discontented with your agreement with Mr. Butterworth, and desirous of leaving him?"

"Butterworth is a rascally cheat, sir, in plain English. A matter of business to be well conducted requires a fool and a clever man, it is said, and I was the fool, unfortunately," said Gerald.

"You have, perhaps, other plans, other and brighter prospects?" inquired Mr. Hyde suavely.

"None whatever, I am sorry to say. I was never in such a hole in all my life! I have been thinking of asking you to give me the benefit of your advice when you get stronger," replied Gerald. "Wardour has kicked out of the traces, and the whole bubble is punctured; but he is blessed with a prosperous haberdasher for an uncle, and means to buy a property, and

go in for cattle and horses. I might sue *in forma pauperis* to my uncle, but I'd starve first!"

"That being the case, I will not say that I have an offer to make you, for I have nothing to offer a man of your birth and position and education. But if you will let me say it, I should esteem it the greatest possible favor to me if you would consent to stay here and manage my farm for me; and I trust you will acquit me of deliberate insult if I say that I can give you three hundred and sixty dollars a year for your services. The work is very hard; it is continuous, and will subject you to constant exposure. I cannot conscientiously advise you to undertake it, but I am selfish enough to hope that you will," said Mr. Hyde, not without embarrassment.

"Stay *here*?" exclaimed Gerald, seeing, as in a flash, all that might be involved in it for him, and finding in the proposition something both to offend and please. "Stay *here*?"

"Only until you can find proper employment for your talents," urged Mr. Hyde.

"But I am such a duffer about American farming. I should be swindling you, sir; I know so little about it," said Gerald.

"With a few hints from me, you can do all that is necessary. The negro, with a few honorable exceptions like Beverly, requires constant supervision, and that you can give. The plotting and planning we can do together. But do not let me influence you unduly. I should not have ventured to say this, perhaps, but I am a *brutum fulmen* now; Edmund goes to school soon, and I could not but be sensible of the great advantage and pleasure it would be to me to have you with us. But the stipend is ridiculous."

"Say no more, sir," now said Gerald. "If you can trust me with your interests, I will do my best. I only hope you will not regret your rashness."

## CHAPTER XIII.

"O ! born with me somewhere that men forget,  
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,  
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough."

*Rossetti.*

THE day after this arrangement was made, Gerald rode over to Butterworth's, to take farewell of "the clan," as the amateur farmers dubbed themselves, and to tell the author of all their woes of the change in his plans. He inwardly congratulated himself when all the dinginess and discomfort and vulgarity of the place made itself more apparent than ever to senses refined by very different surroundings and an incipient passion. He did not know it, but he stepped into the sitting-room with an air of fastidiousness that was not lost upon its occupants.

"Hello ! is that you ? How 's my lord, the king ?" sneered Hargreaves, from behind "Bell's Life." "That swagger suit of yours is just the thing for feeding pigs in, and, if there is a thing that cows appreciate, it is a well-dressed man."

"How are ye, my darlint, illustrious Moildmay, 'joy of my liver,' as they say in the East ? Welcome, ye are ! What 'll ye do ? Poipe, or drink, or what ? Hargreaves, here, has got down to Floridy waters, and Wardour's only got wan bottle left of that nasty, thin Milkwaukee beer ; but trust Terence Flanders ! Every blessed Jim Crow in these parts 'totes a razor' in his boot, convaynient for weddin's, and funerals, and sich, and, while there's an Oirishman above the daisies,

there's a black bottle about him with a little something at the bottom! Take my chair, old chap, and Oi'll poke up the foire, and make yee comfortable. Moy! but Oi'm glad to see yee, and looking as yee do!" burst out Flanders, advancing and giving Gerald a stage embrace.

"Thanks, Terence, nothing. Don't move; I'm all right here. How goes it with all of you? How are you, Ben? You look a deal better than when I left — better *color*," said Gerald, seating himself. "Go on with your two-legged waltz, Wardour; I don't mind now, though I used to feel pretty savage about it. I thought I heard the cries of a piano in distress as I came in."

"Do you really think me better?" said Ben wistfully.

"Of course I do, my boy. You'll be all right after a bit," replied Gerald kindly.

"What an old hypocrite you are, Mildmay!" exclaimed Hargreaves, and laughed brutally; "you know you are talking rot — perfect rot. Ben'll never be any better."

"Ben'll outlive arl of yee, mesilf included," said Flanders, with warmth. And Gerald, stalking outside with much haughtiness, born of his intense dislike to Hargreaves, returned presently, bringing a roll of illustrated papers, which he gave Ben Wardour, saying, "Miss Hyde sent you these."

"The beauteous Ada or the other filly?" asked Hargreaves; but the last half of this sentence found Gerald in the hall again, short as it was.

"Terence," he called, and that gentleman joined him. "If I stop in there, I shall certainly chuck that fellow out of the window, and I don't want to do that. Can't you find Butterworth for me? I want to tell him that I am not coming back here. Mr. Hyde has

offered me the place of manager there — a sort of farm-bailiff, I take it. I know nothing on earth about it, but it is better than this," Gerald explained.

"Yee don't say so! By Jarge, Oi wish somebody would arfer *me* somethin'! Oi'm the most unfartunate man in the whole worruld. Oi've got nobody to look to. There's fellows wid fawthers ready to give 'em anything, and fellows with brothers that sticks to 'em through thick and thin, and fellows wid old aunts that's made of money — there's nothin' like an old aunt, to moy moind; they comes in at the death so convaynient — but Oi've nobody to depind on but Terence Flanders, and I can't depind on *him* at arl! That's the worrust av it! Oi've been depindin' on that fellow now for noine years, and he trips me up nately twinty toimes a day, and then blackguards me to my face for not bein' sure-footed and moindin' my oye; but when it comes to makin' a *livin'*, Oi might as well look to Guy Fawkes for so much as matches to loight my poipe. Oi'm disgusted wid the fellow! Upon my loife, Oi'm ready to chuck up the whole thing. Wardour's a Scotchman, and a Scotchman's loike a donkey — he can live on arf a thistle; and Hargreaves, a rascal, and a rascal's all roight, he can go as wrong as he loikes; but Oi'm an honest, unfartunate man."

"I am afraid you are right about Hargreaves," agreed Gerald; "he's a gentleman by birth, and a talented fellow, but a loose fish — no principle, I should say."

"And moighty quare *practice*, let me tell ye. Ye should have seen him in Barltimore last week. Nora sint me a P. O. O. and we wint down together. Oi wint to a boardin'-house and did the thing chapely, and had a bit of a fling. But Hargreaves put up at the best hotel in the place, and played the lord, wint

to the theatres and all that, and bart arl he wanted at the best shops. And he only had two pounds in his pocket to my certain knowledge! And whin I met him at the station he tipped me the wink and said he'd not a farthing left. 'How are ye going to get back?' I asked him, and arfered to pawn Wardour's overcoat or moy ring, for Oi felt for the fellow, you see, bein' in such an arkward position. Oi'd have been in a blue funk in his place, for arl me native confidence in Terence Flanders. But no, not him! He carled out 'Pawtah! Pawtah!' and had a lot av black fellows running up and catchin' hold of his things in a minute. He borrowed my last dollar to pay 'em, too, and Oi've wanted it since, I can tell ye! And he stepped in the carriage and spint half an hour settlin' himself to his loikin' wid no soign av a ticket! Whin the guard came around he had his head out of the window, and what does he do but get up and shout to him 'Stop the train — stop the train! I've lost my new hat with my ticket in it.' And when the guard declined to do anything of the sart, he gave it to him roundly and slanged him for a matter of fifteen minutes, and thin sat down by me and laid his fingers out in 'Walkers!' behoind his newspaper, and said to me proivitely, 'It was a shocking bad hat.' Oi felt mesilf gettin' so red Oi wonder *Oi* was n't put arff for his evil-doin'. Hell's full of *talent*, Moildmay. Oi arn't a praste, no more am Oi a nun, but Oi've got virtue enough to kape me poorer than a church mouse on earth, though it'll never take me to Heaven, Oi'm thinkin'. And Oi was scandalized."

"Disgraceful business," said Gerald. "No wonder Englishmen have the reputation of being scamps out here, and are not more liked and respected. A nice respectable lot we'd be considered at home, with our habits — to say nothing of our ingratiating manners

and happy faculty of disarming prejudice and suiting ourselves to the people of whatever place we may be patronizing for the time being."

He thought of his talk with Claudia as he spoke. "Englishmen are never content out of England, and they ought never to leave it, for they are never without somebody there to lick or kick them into shape. I advise you to cut this, Flanders. Butterworth is a swindler, in my opinion. At any rate his plans have 'eventuated in a fizzle,' as the American papers say. Go somewhere; find something, somewhere. Don't stop on here."

"Oi've yet to foind a man that's bein' hanged object to bein' cut down. But what the juice am Oi to do, and where am Oi to go? Wardour's bart a little farm and is stockin' it — a stud farm. And Hargreaves has taken to jockeyin' in harses; but unless Oi turrun clown in a circus, or footpad, Oi see no way whatever out of it. H'what's that hangin' out of your pocket?"

"Oh! a ball of twine," replied Gerald, who had been tying straw about the roots of Claudia's roses, but did not care to mention the fact.

"So it is. Oi'll relieve ye of it. It'll come in useful," said Flanders, with his usual gift at small appropriations and admirable forethought. "There's a little *gurrul*, Moildmay —"

"Just go on, Terence, will you? I'll catch you up presently. There's Butterworth now coming in the gate. No; wait a bit. He's hitching his horse," said Gerald, who thought he was about to be treated to a description of Flanders's fiftieth charmer. "What you say is very true. I only wish I could help you out. I've only just got standing room myself, you see. But if I ever can do anything for you, I will. You know that, don't you, old fellow?"



"I do. Well, Oi'll have to grin and let some other fellow walk the floor. But oh! thim pigs, wid apples ready roasted in their mouths, running loose everywhere! And thim thoroughbreds, and the cattle and crops, and moy foine, independant estate! Where have they all garne? There's no payce in this worruld unless you're ayther a stone or lyin' under wan! It's comin' on to rain. Stop and doine! We're boy way av entertainin' the nobility and gintry. We've got a new set of steel farks, and plates enough to go round. And Oi've larded the fowls mesilf that Wardour bart. It's Ben's birthday, and Oi don't suppose the poor lad'll ever see another. Beastly, was n't it, of that brute Hargreaves, to speak as he did?"

"Abominable!" agreed Gerald.

"Is 'mum' the worruld with thim others about your new plan? If it is, say so. There niver was but wan Oirishman besoides mesilf that could kape a secret, and he confessed to a murder in his sleep, and was hanged for that same; arl through taalkin', you see! But Oi'll be as dumb as a fish, Oi promise ye."

"I'll tell them myself," said Gerald. "I'll not put your friendship to such a severe test. It is no secret, and no great matter in any way; only I should think it might be a healthy, manly life for an industrious fellow, and I don't think I am lazy — a definite livelihood at any rate. The conditions of life over here are perfectly different from our own in many respects. The mistake we English make — some of us at least — is that we are so stupid and stiff-necked, so arrogant and dull, that we think we are conferring a favor upon these people by coming here at all. We believe that we are the brightest ornaments of their society, or would be if we chose to go into it; that everything is different, and that nothing matters in the

way of outrageous conduct—just as if good sense and good taste and good breeding were not necessary everywhere, and a gentleman *always* a gentleman! We associate with all the roughs and toughs and shady people we can pick up, and declare it does n't matter over here! We expect to prove that we are gentlemen by behaving like a lot of adventurers and cads, and think to go from the charming friends whom we pick up in bar-rooms and livery stables into gentlemen's houses, and be received with open arms! Wardour was lolling in the door of the bar-room with a low fellow the other day in Wyvvern, as I was passing with Miss Hyde, and absolutely had the impudence to speak to her. Confound him! She affected not to see him, of course. I felt uncommonly like giving him one straight out from the shoulder, but, being with a lady, could take no notice of it. He's a respectable ass enough at home; but out here, even he feels that he can be as rude as he pleases, and that he is doing a rattling fine thing. And Hargreaves was there at the back of the place, regularly screwed. She saw him, too. Oh! a nice lot we are!—precious acquisitions to any community! I only wonder the government does n't meet us all at New York when we land, and offer us all seats in the cabinet, or provide for us for life handsomely."

"There's truth in what yee say, Moildmay. Oi'm arlways tellin' 'em they put on arltogether too much soide. But why are yee so *roiled* about it?"

Gerald was by no means prepared to answer this question, innocent home thrust that it was so it was lucky that Butterworth joined them before he could invent a social fiction instead.

That gentleman greeted Gerald effusively, and would have shaken hands. But Gerald somehow was busy lighting a cigar, gave him a curt nod instead, and, lead-

ing the way into his own room, trailed his guns and opened fire, but with his usual coolness in action.

"Will you sit down? There are one or two points that I should like to discuss with you, now that I have recovered," he said; and Butterworth sat down, wearing a rather startled look of uneasy expectation. "In the first place, I wish to know what you propose to do for me, so that I can form some idea of the future in store for me. You remember, of course, that you promised to give me an independent position when I had been with you a year, in charge of a farm of my own; you said that I was to share the profits of this one; you agreed to teach me to farm scientifically, in the American style; you also agreed to furnish all the machinery and stock necessary."

"Yes, yes. You are right. You state the case fairly; but what of it, my dear sir?" asked Butterworth suavely.

"What of it? That is what I should like to ask. In default of farm, stock, or profits, that is precisely the question. It may have struck you that I might have stopped at home and put in my time cleaning out pig styes, and playing farm-laborer and ostler combined, without paying a premium of eighty pounds for the privilege and board, or putting myself to the trouble of crossing the Atlantic."

"Doubtless you *could*, but *would* you, now? And though you have had a rough time of it, you must not be impatient and discontented! That is fatal to any man's career! The agricultural processes of every country are slow ones. It takes time to learn them. Rome was not built in a day, my dear sir. I grant that you have begun at the foot of the ladder; we all begin there in this country. But we don't *stay* there — no, indeed. We mount, sir; we mount to the top, and survey with pride the obstacles we have overcome," said Butterworth, now fairly in the saddle.

"I suppose you don't *all* mount, do you? There must be some who stay at the bottom all their lives," said Gerald, "even in America."

"Exactly. But when they do, it is their own fault."

"Ah! you think so? Then if I don't succeed it will not be your fault in the least. This is all very pretty, Butterworth, but not so convincing as it might be. Suppose you make it a little clearer to a befogged Briton *how* he is to rise. How long is my apprenticeship to last?" asked Gerald.

"Two or three years ought to do it. Yes, I should say three years," replied Butterworth reflectively.

Gerald sat up, and rested one hand on his knee. "And I am not to be given a farm until then?" he said.

"Oh, yes, you will, I *think*."

"When?"

"That depends on circumstances," replied Butterworth.

"I don't mean that it shall depend on circumstances, if by that you mean your dictum. Shall I have it in three months, in six, in a year?"

"I can't say precisely. In about a year, I should think — that is, if you are prepared to make a considerable further advance to stock it. My crops have not been abundant, and I may not be able to cover all that expense then."

"Oh! I see."

"There is plenty of land to be had about here. You will then know all about farming. I will give the land, and see that your money is put in such a shape as to yield the largest returns," added Butterworth.

"To whom, you or me?" asked Gerald.

"Oh, *you*, of course. Why, we can take that farm

and lay it down in celery alone, *under glass*, and realize fifty per cent. on the investment. We can send it north, south, east, and west, and make more by it than by all the wheat and corn grown in the country! Celery is a thing people will have."

"Well, I am ready to put in more money," said Gerald.

"You are!" said Butterworth (or, rather, "You air!"), alertly.

"You can take the premium I paid you and devote it to that purpose," added Gerald, and Butterworth's smile changed into a frosty and constrained semblance of itself that ill became him.

"Do you know what you are doing?" asked Gerald, with a steely flash in his direct gaze.

"Of course I do. I understand what I am doing perfectly," replied Butterworth, in aggrieved tones.

"So do I, Butterworth. You are *lying* and *shuffling* and *cheating*, that's what you are doing," asserted Gerald, rising as he spoke, but still cool, and speaking as though he were telling the pleasantest truths in the world, so far as any agitation or emotion went. "You've *been lying* and *cheating* and *shuffling* all along! I find, on inquiry, that you have neither property nor character nor credit out here. I understand your little scheme perfectly. I am not coming back here at all. You are a *swindler*, and I've done with you. Now, look here, I have this to say to you. If you bring any more Englishmen out here under false pretenses, I shall have you arrested; and if I catch you advertising any more in the English papers, I'll make it my business to show you up in your true colors. You have plucked these pigeons already, but you'll get no more, I can tell you. I could prosecute you, and I feel very much inclined to cane you; but I'll let you off this time. Get out of this, now; I am

going to pack up my effects, and I'll dispense with your precious company."

"I'll do nothing of the sort, sir. I'll not be ordered out of this room! This room is *mine*; and it is I who have been grossly deceived and insulted by you! I'll not go, sir, I repeat," blustered Butterworth.

"I think you will. I think you'll go this very moment. There's the door," replied Gerald calmly, and Butterworth *went*.

"I say! Look here! What's up? Are you really going to hook it out of this?" asked Wardour, coming in while he was strapping up bundles, and locking trunks.

"Old Butther's out there, swearing like the army in Flandthers. Mee noble, me loion-hearted boy! Come to me arrums!" cried Flanders, following him in and perching on the bed. "Yee 've been pitchin' into him, have n't yee, now? I heard yee, and though it's not moy *habit* to pick quarrels, for Oi'm the most paysible of min, Oi got moy thorn stick and waited out there, just *on the chance* av gettin' a whack or a crack at him — not to spoil sport, yee understand; just a bit av loively play to make him moind his oye! Here! let me help yee wid thim straps." He went down on his knees as he spoke and began tugging at them, most agreeably exhilarated by the past disturbance, which was the next best thing to a prospective row. "There yee are, now, all roight and toight, and in marchin' order."

"What did you get up for, Flanders? I was about to give you my benediction," said Hargreaves scornfully, from the door, against which he was lounging.

"Oi was arlways a scapegrace!" replied Flanders the ready. "And whin Oi want a blessin' Oi'll get it from the roight shop, thank yee. Oi don't loike 'em fly-blown, like some min's reputations. Oi'm pertikiler about thim little things."

A laugh greeted this sally.

"Oh! I say. You are not going *away*, are you?" asked Ben wistfully, joining the party.

"Yes, Ben, I am. I've had enough of Butter and his butterfly schemes. He's a rogue, and I've told him so to his face. I'm going to be manager for Mr. Hyde. But don't look so disconsolate, old fellow; you are going away yourself soon, aren't you; going home?"

"Yes, I am," agreed Ben. "Don't you wish you were coming, too? I do."

"No, I can't say I do," said Gerald. "Where have the labels got to, Terence?"

"You would n't go home if you could, either, would you, Hargreaves?" chaffed Wardour.

"Oh! would n't I just! *Rather*. Mildmay must either be in love *here*, or in great disgrace *there*, to talk such rubbish," replied Hargreaves; "I'd not stay in this cursed country a day if I could help it. Beastly hole!"

Gerald colored furiously and was about to speak, but he thought better of it, and went on with his work.

"Well, nobody wants you to stay that I can see," remarked Wardour.

"I never said that I was wanted. I know I'm not. Your prattle, Wardour, is like the first, freshest, greenest lettuce leaves of a late spring — you are so refreshingly idiotic — a little soporific, perhaps, if taken in any quantity, but still refreshing, very! Does it ever strike you that you are an ass?" retorted Hargreaves.

"Oh! but yee *are* 'wanted' in both England and America *by the police*. Scotland Yard is pining for yee, and Inspector Bucket's low in the mouth since his larst soight of yee, and very interested in the telegrams from this soide, payple tell me," put in Flanders.

"Well, what need you care? You've been kicked

out of your regiment, I know ; but you are no pal of mine, and neither interested nor implicated, that I can see," replied Hargreaves, a dark flush rising to the very roots of his hair.

"By Jarge ! I'll not let *anybody*, not even a duffer loike *you*, say I was kicked out of my regiment ! Oi'm six foot three, and yee can warruk under my arm, but ye've got to take back thim worruds or get *smashed*, jolly well punished. D' ye hear ?" roared Flanders angrily.

"Stuff ! Do you think I'm frightened of you ? Come on if you'd like to try a round !" retorted Hargreaves. "I'm rather a dab at fisticuffs, or used to be when I was at Harrow."

"Do yee *apologoize*—tell me that ?" demanded Flanders.

"Shut up, Terence. Hang it all ! What are you two rowing about ?" demanded Gerald.

"Do yee apologize humbly, or do yee not ?" insisted Flanders.

"*Shut up*, Terence ! Come away !" said Gerald imperatively. "Stop, Hargreaves."

He laid a hand on Flanders and drew him away as he spoke.

"Well, if you were not kicked out, you *ought* to have been, Flanders," said Hargreaves.

"And where would *you* be if yee had your deserts, pray ? Opinions are one thing, facts quite another. Stick to the truth when yee have occasion to speak of an arficer and a gentleman, if you please, — *if yee can*," replied Flanders angrily.

"Oh, you go hang ! Let's have a Polly and B., Wardour ; I'm as thirsty as a limekiln," retorted Hargreaves, and turned coolly away, leaving Flanders with face, hair, and feelings alike in a flame.

Gerald now gathered up his effects, and, putting them



in a heap, told Flanders to keep an eye on them. "Uncle Beverly will bring a cart over for them tomorrow. Here's an umbrella and cane for you, old chap, and my traveling kit—you are always messing about with pots and pans. Sorry to leave you here; but something will turn up for you, too, depend upon it," he said as he left the room.

"Thank yee, Moildmay, thank yee," said Flanders, much pleased, and, opening the umbrella forthwith, was fully alive to the fact that it was a new and handsome one.

"It's an all silk paragon, loike the giver! Wardour's got that akenomical wid his cotton gamp it's no pleasure to borrow it anny more, except for a joke, and it with three ribs broke and two patches, and his name on it in full! Moy! but there's mane min in this worruld! Come arn! Oi'll not be here long wid 'em wid *you* garn, Oi can tell yee! Oi'd start somewhere now, if blackberries were ripe and the warkin' good; but they ain't, and this is a crois in mee affairs."

Gerald had a word with the others as he passed out.

"You are in luck, Mildmay. I shall hook it out of this myself as soon as I can. But I'm tremendously hard up. I have dropped twenty pounds on loo lately, and I have to stop on awhile. You are no friend of mine, but all the same I'm sorry you are going, for you are the only gentleman of the lot, and I'm ready to cut their throats sometimes, and my own into the bargain," was Hargreaves's characteristic farewell.

"I shall cut my stick in about a fortnight. I've got all my plans laid, and my nest feathered, and I see my way to making a very good thing of it out here after all. I shall take Ben home, and then come back.

I'm a practical, sensible man, and I'm tired of this life, and sick of these fellows. I shall look out for myself now, and they can go hang, for all I care! If you had stopped on we might have hit on something, for you are not like these lazy hounds. I'm sorry you are going; but you are better out of it. I'll nip over to see you, and dine with you as like as not before I go," said Wardour privately to him.

"You are the only one among them all who cares whether I live or die, and, though there's nothing to stay for, I wish you were not going," said Ben aside. "I shall be glad to get under a decent roof, I know. What with bad air, and bad tobacco, and drink, and quarrels, and the rest of it, I get no peace or comfort day or night. Thank Miss Hyde, will you? I think she's lovely, and so kind. She's always sending me something, and I'm an entire stranger to her."

"She's good to everybody," said Gerald gently. "It's too late now, but I wish I had been kinder to you when I was here. I see now that I might have done a lot of little things for your comfort. I'm a selfish brute, my boy, and that's the truth! Take care of yourself, and, if you can't stand the climate at home, take my advice and go to Egypt."

"I've thought of that. Good-bye — good luck to you!" replied Ben, and all the household trooped out and saw Gerald off from the little porch.

"*That* chapter is ended," thought Gerald, as he turned in his saddle in the lane and looked back. "Poor fellows! I wonder what is to become of them. Heavens! how I have suffered in that wretched spot, physically and mentally. And now — what? Plenty of drudging work, certainly, but in the open air. I could n't stand sitting on a stool all day or hanging over a counter. My board and *schooling*, most likely. And my large fortune, where is *that*? It might lie

in that woman — truth and tenderness, courage and absolute unselfishness, unusual intelligence, and a fine breeding, such as most modern fine ladies have almost lost even the tradition of, have I already seen in her. She has both sweetness and strength; a sweetness that is never mawkish or sentimental; not that of a French bonbon like Lili Bertholand, a confection of honey that cloyed, and intoxicating *liqueurs*, and dye and artificial scents, but sweet as a dewy rose, or a rain-freshened violet. I don't know which flower she is most like. She has the royal quality of one, the reserved charm of the other; set near her native earth, too, with all her leaves clustered thick about her, home loving, home staying, home blessing, — a woman through and through. And her strength! It is a mistake to suppose women weak at all, but their strength is very different in degree and kind from ours and from each other's. When young Haskins killed himself in Madame Le Mercier's drawing-room that day in Paris, it turned me sick with horror to look at him lying there. But she was as cool as the porter at the Morgue, and her only comment on the affair was that it was *très mauvais goût*. But that is not Miss Hyde's courage at all. During that operation she stood her ground like a soldier of the Old Guard, and how tenderly she wiped his face and kissed his hand! but it was agony to her, and when it was over she shook like a leaf for an hour, and cried like a baby. She is a *rara avis* — all that I ever dreamed a woman could be. How strange that I should find her here in this old eighteenth-century manor-house, with people, furniture, ideas, and ideals to match, after seeking her in half the capitals of Europe, in my own and so many other countries! What greater fortune could a man have than such a wife? But what should I do with a wife? And such a wife! I understand now what

Charles meant when he said I'd better try to do something to deserve a good woman's love. I despaired of finding the woman then; and now that I've found her, I despair of myself."

He rode into Wyvvern, dined there at a small shop-restaurant, got his mail, and rode back to the "Bower." By this time it was nearly dark, and the night had the chill of September in it. He put up his horse himself for the first time, and entered the house to find the first fire of the season glorifying the dining-room, to find Claudia in a blue gown standing in the yellow light of the flaming pine knots before her work-table, on which she was pressing her tambour-work. She put down her hot iron on the hearth at once, smiled, pushed aside a large paper box and some wrapping papers, saying: "Here's a comfortable chair. You are late. And you look tired. Is n't this what you would call 'jolly'?"

"Yes, awfully jolly, thanks," said Gerald. "Are muddy boots allowed in here?"

"Not in the abstract, perhaps, but always when the gentlemen of this household are cold or wet. Excuse my going on with my work. We have no state apartments or fine things in the way of furniture and carpets here, and can make ourselves as comfortable as we choose, in here especially. We gather here all winter long, and I have moved my table down, as you see. Mammy! Mammy! bring Mr. Mildmay's tea," said Claudia, crossing the room and opening a door.

"I will, honey; I'm comin' dis minute," was heard from the pantry.

"I will pour it out for you, and then you must let mammy give you all you need," said Claudia, when mammy brought the tea. "I'm in a desperate hurry; my box is going off, and I've just five minutes to put it up! Pontius is waiting for it. Besides, you are now at home and one of us."

"Thank you," said Gerald, and took his cup from her hand, and sat down and drank it, luxuriating in the warmth, in the sense of being at home, in the cheerful vitality of atmosphere that seemed always to surround Claudia, his eyes following her quick movements contentedly. The pressing done, she displayed her work.

"I really admire it myself," she said. "It does look nice, does n't it?" and then she went down on her knees to put it in the box between layers of tissue papers.

"A work of art, really! Such a lot of stitches — and all done by one little pair of hands," said Gerald, examining it closely. He then corded the box and gave it to Pontius, who stood gazing in the background, twisting a ragged hat (with a quarter which made his black eyes dance, and sent him out of the room with a skip and bound), and took his seat again, Claudia having sunk into hers.

"*That's done*; I am so glad," she said. "I hope he'll catch the night express. He is such a flibberty-gibbet, I always feel some anxiety about my parcels."

"If I had known it, I would have taken it. Why did n't you tell me?" asked Gerald.

"Oh, *no*! After your long ride! It is only that my box represents so much. It means three months' work for one thing, and that is no joke."

Here she clasped her hands over her head with one of her natural, graceful movements. She turned and looked at him, but without coquetry. "It means an easy chair for father, one of those big 'sleepy hollows.' It means a suit of clothes for Keith. It means a pair of skates for Wyn. It means a head-handkerchief for mammy. It means a pound of 'Lone Jack' for Uncle Beverly; and lots of other things. Do you think there is anything in this world as perfectly delicious as giving things to those you love?"

"I don't know; I have never had the prerequisite luxury, the people to love. And what does the box mean for you, yourself?"

"Oh, I don't know; I need a few little things, paper and pins, and such like; and I forgot, I have ordered 'The Newcomes,'" said Claudia.

"It seems to me that yours is scarcely the lion's share," remarked Gerald.

"Oh, I'm all right. It does n't matter about me. And I really have all I give away, you know."

"I know you think it does n't," said Gerald earnestly.

"Well, you have burnt your ships to-day, have n't you, and crossed the Rubicon? Was it much of a wrench?" said she, not caring to talk of herself.

"Yes, I have; I am no longer a *flaneur*, an ex-diplomat, an aristocratic lily of the field, a waiter for dead men's shoes, a cumberer of the earth; no longer a miserable exile, a forlorn stranger. I am 'a horny-handed son of toil,' as you say over here. I am Mr. Hyde's bailiff, and Miss Hyde's respectful servant," said Gerald.

He rose as he spoke, and stood in front of the fire, looking at her.

"I got that to-day," he said, handing her a letter.

She took it and read it; it was from his uncle, and was very kind and affectionate.

"I am so glad," she said. "And you are not sorry that you wrote, are you? He is evidently very much attached to you, and very glad to have the breach between you closed."

"And so am I. I did n't know how it hurt to be at odds with him until I got it. All the soreness and bitterness faded out the moment I saw the beginning of it — 'My dear boy!' And you see he blames himself for it all. I feel now as though the fault had been

mine altogether. I am more glad than I can say. You see I never knew any other father. And I owe it all to you," said Gerald, and his eyes thanked her. "You are a wise counselor. It was not a wrench at all to leave Butterworth's; I was only too glad."

"I hope you will be happy with us," she said simply.

"I am sure I shall; I have not been so happy for years as I am to-night," said Gerald.

"You must not be *too* sure," she added. "It is not what you ought to have at all."

"I will *not* be too sure. But I see — *land!*" said Gerald, and looked over her head. He dropped into his chair again after a moment's silence. "It is so miserable to be all at sea, to be idle and worse than idle," he added, as if by way of explanation. "Why, if there is n't Mrs. Blunt!"

"Yes, she came home this afternoon," said Claudia. "Come over here in this warm corner, out of the draught, auntie. I'll go get a lamp."

## CHAPTER XIV.

"A conquering new-born joy awoke  
And filled her life with day."

*Matthew Arnold.*

INTO a farmer did Gerald thus blossom, and, being a manly fellow, succeeded well at man's first trade. It pleased him to find that Mr. Hyde both leaned upon him and trusted him while giving him the benefit of his advice.

"Now that you are to be my right-hand man, your seat at table must be changed. Daughter Claudia, put Mr. Mildmay down here by me, that we may be able to braid Ceres's tresses whenever we choose," that gentleman said; and not only was this done, but the change in his position from guest to what he laughingly called "hired man" was marked by a delicate but perceptible increase of courtesy and kindness on the part of every member of the household. He was up and off at daylight until snow came, and took to his ploughing and harrowing and sowing of wheat — to all his duties, in fact, with great heartiness and spirit. He got every book in the house that bore on the subject, and studied it diligently. He talked to every other farmer whom he met about ways and methods of management, soils, subsoiling, manuring, planting — the care of the animals, sheep-lore, pigs, Alderneys *versus* Jerseys, and to Mr. Hyde by the hour. He was thoroughly in earnest about the matter, and, when Ada rallied him about it, said, with some vexation, "Well, I must get



my bread *honestly*." His European ideas of farm-laborers, their duties and responsibilities, received some very rude shocks, and had to be entirely reconstructed. But by dint of overseeing, instead of merely ordering, — he came to understand very soon that, from putting away a hoe to securing a haystack, nothing would be done unless he saw it done, — he succeeded in getting the most astonishing amount of work out of the negro hands, kept their good will by tempering his strictness with kindness, and soon got things into admirable condition. But it was not all cakes and ale, by any means. He found that pigs knew ten times as much about getting out of pens as the greatest mechanical genius does about keeping them in. His sense of order was continually offended by the "hands," who had never heard, apparently, of Heaven's first law, and his efforts to make them systematic were often pathetic. Fields were stony, and ploughs broke. Lambs were killed by neighbors' dogs. Potatoes that promised any number of bushels to the acre failed to yield enough seed to redeem that promise a year hence, even. Must and blight, and "seasons" of all kinds had to be considered and conquered.

Yet in spite of physical weariness and much mental perplexity and aggravation of temper, in spite of all the difficulties and discouragements of the situation, he liked the life. He worked hard, but he liked hard work; of child's play and play generally he had had more than enough, and his moral muscles, like his physical ones, strengthened with every day of this active, useful, open-air life. And the day's work done, he always turned joyfully homeward, out of the rain or sleet or sun, laying aside its cares or worries — stepping out of them as out of a garment when he wheeled his horse inside the gate and hedge that fenced about the "Bower," and stepping into rest, peace, pleasantness.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," was indeed a stray verse that often came into his mind in those days, and it was to Claudia, of course, that he applied them, as he watched her "household motions, light and free, and steps of virgin liberty," though if he had been asked he could not have told where it came from — supposed himself to be quoting from the British poets. "Suppose you let me try my hand with the kids," he said to her one night, as he saw her preparing to give the boys their lessons. "I think I could manage the 'hic, hæc, hoc' business; though I must own that I was plucked for my little go and ploughed for smalls."

At this Claudia laughed her own delicious laugh, which was as infectious in its merriment and as sweet as a baby's bubbling outbursts from the clear spring of undefiled joy.

"What — *what* is a little go? and what are 'smalls'?" she cried, and when Gerald had explained these Britishisms they laughed together. The table being cleared, the books were brought, and the boys came in, and lessons began, with more laughter. And Mr. Hyde, from one side of the fireplace, and Mrs. Blunt, from the other, made their little comments on the new departure, and laughed, too; and the boys were not slow to follow suit. And Gerald, sitting on the opposite side of the table from Claudia, looking at the loving face that seemed to him a star for light and beauty, as she turned now to one, now to another of her dear ones, found it so sweet to look and listen that the evening sped away as it had never done at the most brilliant entertainment he could have recalled. Edison himself will never invent anything with half the illuminating power of a tender woman's face, or of the happiness it can give. When Uncle Beverly emerged from the shadows of the black wainscoting (where he

was so often lost that Gerald always looked sharply over there at night before speaking of him), and with much *hauteur* said: "*I'se* waitin' to shut up de house," nobody could believe that the faithful old Queen Anne clock on the mantel shelf was telling the truth when it declared that it was past eleven.

Gerald usually turned in at nine, and slept like a log from sheer fatigue. But that night he got no rest, for he was tossing on a great and wide sea, on which he had just set sail, and looking at a beautiful star which had just risen above the horizon.

Many another such evening did he know in the year that followed, and not a few such nights. Early in October Ada gathered up all her feathers and furbelows, and departed for Baltimore, where she spent three months; and this element of discord removed, Gerald and Claudia were thrown more and more together. It was a relief to Gerald, for folly has its inspirations no less than wisdom, and he had an uncomfortable sense that she divined his passion. Pique had done the office of perception. She had said one or two little things to him from which he had shrunk inwardly, while he parried with a smile the feminine bodkin thrust. She had no idea that he disliked her, or that nothing could have made her more odious to him. Unfortunately there is nothing in the philosophy of optics that teaches us to "see ourselves as others see us."

It was around the big dining-table, night after night, that Gerald and Mr. Hyde cast up their accounts, read their papers, and had their consultations. It was there that Mrs. Blunt made her pretty *bonbonnières*, and it was there that Gerald came fully to share and understand the family life of the Hydés, so high in tone, so simple, hospitable, refined in tradition and practice. It was there, too, that he came to see the very charming relation that existed between Claudia and the boys, and

gained an ever-increasing respect for her character and judgment. They were all very fond of her, and not in the least afraid of her, but she had a kind of sweet severity with them that controlled them perfectly without ever wounding them. They sat often on each side of her and held a hand apiece. They stretched themselves out at her feet ; they sat on her lap, and petted her in rough cub-fashion, so roughly, indeed, that Gerald more than once started up with a very red face, seeing her dodge a romping blow right, only to catch it left, or wince when the lobe of her ear was nipped too severely, crying out, "*Don't. You hurt her, you young rascal !*" to Claudia's surprise.

"How refined and gently feminine she is, even when she is romping with them. There is always something noble and maidenly about Claudia," he thought, as he looked on.

She would let the boys chase her around the big table, and all over the house, sometimes, and give them hard work to catch her, come in flushed and laughing with them when caught. But the next moment she would say, "Now for *work*, boys ; get your books and buckle to it. And just remember that lessons honestly prepared will relieve father from all care and anxiety in a few years. Edmund and Wyn are to be his stay and support, and Keith, here, is to be the prop of *my* old age."

She would then sit down by them quietly, and with serene gravity exact from them all their tasks, with perfect firmness and sweetness combined.

"What judgment she shows in dealing with them ; and so much tact and discernment and sensitiveness to all that affects or is likely to affect their character and usefulness. I never have seen such fidelity to duty ; yet she is never either hard or harsh," thought Gerald.

Night after night that evening lamp was constantly

revealing fresh glories and meanings and beauties in the face on which its soft radiance was cast. With the eye of love he was always seeking and finding virtues and charms and graces that filled his mind with her gentle womanly image, and satisfied a heart sound at the core, but somewhat seared by the wickedness of what is called the great world, and so wearied by its vanities and frivolities, so wounded in the house of his friends, that he had almost ceased to believe in God and truth and love.

The knowledge thus gained fed his passion and chastened it; as interest begot enthusiasm, and enthusiasm reverent, tender love, his faith revived, but a lover's lens so magnified his poverty, and made so terribly clear his unworthiness that hope was almost barred out, and love assured and returned seemed madness. Still he had ineffable satisfactions of his own in the constant spectacle of so much goodness, the purity and worth of the jewel, the vastness and preciousness of the treasure.

"Il n'y a point de déguisement qui puisse longtemps cacher l'amour où il est, ni le feindre où il n'est pas," says La Rochefoucauld; and there is nothing so infectious as tenderness; so it was natural enough that Claudia should become aware that certain forces and influences were at work in her life before they had long been in operation. From the first she had, indeed, made her own reflections on the subject with something more than mere intellectual curiosity. A handsome, agreeable stranger, bearing the unmistakable stamp of a man of rank and fashion, just out of a dangerous illness, interesting in himself as a novelty and as a foreigner, cannot be dropped as from the skies into any household in which there are women without creating a very decided sensation, and making a very decided impression of some sort. An impression, and a very pleasant one, did Gerald make upon Claudia at once.

She had often said of her father that he was the finest gentleman she had ever known. She had never been thrown intimately with any man who was not a gentleman. But she instantly perceived about Gerald the *mille-fleurs bouquet* of the accomplished European gentleman, the repose of the Vere de Vere caste, the St. James *cachet*. She was interested, as one is in a new book. She compared him with the other Englishmen at Butterworth's. They all seemed to her to have a kind of grown-up childishness, which in him took the form of a very deceptive simplicity, for how could a man, born and bred under such conditions, be really simple! The entire absence of anything like ostentation or pretension was familiar to her; for Southern people of all classes are devoid of it, and in her own it was considered the surest mark of a fetlock in the blood, or of the futility of attempting to manufacture silk purses out of swinish materials.

But Mr. Wardour had told her who Gerald was, and had grown almost grandiloquent in his attempt to show what "a gentleman in the old country" was like, quite pompous and absurd in his efforts to impress her with the magnificence of show-places like "The Towers." The facts about Gerald had somehow reached Butterworth's, but not through Gerald. The atmosphere of courts, the aroma of the drawing-rooms of most of the capitals of Europe clung to this exiled Desdichado; his every attitude and accent showed what Continental polish can do for English wood when the grain is fine, the oak sound.

"He is more polished than Mr. Hargreaves," she decided, "and not in the least like that rollicking, jollicking Mr. Flanders, or of the same tribe as Mr. Wardour, who is a very sensible person, and I hear pays his debts honestly and behaves himself as a rule, but is certainly *not* a gentleman — though he would be

shocked to hear it. But is Mr. Mildmay really any better than they are at heart, in principle, character?" In a little while it was "How great his advantages of travel, education, association have been. Oh! dear, how ignorant I am. It is almost an education to hear him talk; if I knew him better I should like to ask him to describe for my benefit at length the places and people he mentions casually as if everybody knew all about them. How perfect his manner to father and auntie. I wish the boys would imitate his table manners. But they won't! Little wretches, they would far rather take Pontius for their model of deportment. Bless them!"

After her father's accident her thoughts often dwelt on his conduct during that great trial. "I shall never forget how kind he has been, so thoughtful and gentle — like a woman; so kind and unselfish, too, and making light of all he did. His quiet strength was such a comfort to me. His composure is extraordinary. I believe if I were to go to him this minute and tell him that the house was on fire, he would say calmly, 'Where do you keep your buckets and blankets, and have you a hose, Miss Hyde?' as if we had one every day at about the same hour. He can't have a nerve in his body. I wonder what *would* excite him? It is so kind in him to teach the boys hockey and cricket. After seeing him in father's sick room I have no longer any doubt that he is entirely worthy of our friendship and a true gentleman. He seems to have a horror of being thanked, but he can't prevent us from feeling grateful. I wonder if there is any truth in that story of Mr. Wardour's about his being jilted by some girl in England? He is evidently a very proud man, and a very sensitive one. How he must have suffered — if it is true. Poor fellow."

When her father told her of the arrangement he had

made with Gerald, she was so long silent that he said to her : —

“I hope, my daughter, that you have no objection to urge. Does the idea displease you? I thought of consulting you first, but you have always appeared to like Mr. Mildmay, and I deemed it therefore unnecessary.”

And to this, Claudia the frank demurely replied, —

“As you please, father. You are the best judge of such matters.”

She had always felt and said that people who are in a family, but not of it, are miserable themselves and make every one else so, but somehow she did not press the point now.

She thought the matter over for an hour as she sat there mending her father's linen. She was conscious of being extremely pleased by the turn affairs had taken ; so much so that she felt it necessary to say to herself, “He will not stay more than a few months, in all probability. He doesn't know what he is undertaking. One of our winters will more than suffice him, with all the exposure and the rough work ; and then he will go away, disgusted, back to England, most likely, and we shall never see him again. Still I shall always remember him with pleasure. He is so cultivated, and has been so kind.”

The zeal with which he entered upon his new duties, and the manliness which led him to make light of all his fatigue, exposure, and cares, secured for him both her respect and sympathy. She saw that when one of the laborers failed him for any reason, he did the work himself ; as when he was putting in the wheat crop and ploughed for a week, “like any Hodge,” as he laughingly said at dinner, “only I am a new hand at the bellows. It has taken me down several pegs in my own estimation to see how much more the most stupid



of these black fellows knows about it than I. But I can't bear to be beat, and I don't mean to be either."

Claudia, in search of Charley and Wyn one morning in October, heard a great uproar in the corn crib, and, looking in, found Gerald, the "hands," and the boys all installed there, shucking corn in high glee.

"I am afraid there isn't a seat to offer you, Miss Hyde," said Gerald, rising, "unless you will take the post of honor over in the corner on that old saddle. But first let me play Raleigh to your Elizabeth and put my coat over it, to make it a little more comfortable, and keep the dust from your gown."

He did this, and, though Claudia protested that she could not stay, it ended in her staying for at least twenty minutes.

"You look amazingly industrious in here," she said, looking about her.

"We *are* amazingly industrious; look there!" said Gerald, pointing to the great golden heap piled high in front of him.

"And I thought I heard singing as I came in? Oh! Wyn, you've got on your best suit! How *could* you? Run away this moment, and get into your old corduroys, dear," said Claudia.

"They are all patched at the back, and the sleeves are torn out and the knees are out, and I don't like to wear them," objected Wyn.

"Never mind, dear. They are quite good enough for this sort of thing," urged Claudia.

"I told you, youngster, that you were much too smart for this business, and that your auntie would pitch into you for it. Look at me, what a prize ruffian I am, with my trousers tucked in my boots, and my old clothes on. Cut along and do as you are told," said Gerald, and Wyn obeyed.

"You have taken the skin off your hands in two or

three places," said Claudia, with a little furrow between her brows. "It is too bad."

"Oh! that's nothing. I have quite enough left to serve my purpose," said Gerald carelessly.

"But that is quite a bad place on your thumb. You should tie it up."

"Oh, no! It will be all right in a few days. If I might toss you this ring, though, Miss Hyde — catch! It is a little large for me, and I am afraid of losing it. It has already a history," said Gerald.

Claudia caught the ring and put it in her pocket, without looking at it.

"I was playing cricket some years ago with a party of men near Cairo, and when the game was over I missed my ring. It was my father's."

"May I look at it?" interjected Claudia, getting it out, and, receiving full permission, examined the stone, setting, and crest, lending an attentive ear to Gerald the while.

"Naturally I value it most highly. Well, we looked high and low for it, but it seemed absurd to go on for five minutes, even, out there in the desert, so I gave it up for lost. We started to walk back to Shepherd's, and I got talking with a fellow about flying-machines, and, in trying to describe one invented by M. Ledoux that I had seen in Brussels, I stopped to draw a diagram of the propeller with my cane, and up came my ring!"

"How extraordinary!"

"A chance in about a million, I should think, when you think what sand is. But I've not done. I hope you have a certain amount of confidence in me, because I am about to make a severe demand upon it?" said Gerald.

"I have," said Claudia, smiling.

"Thank you. Well, five years after that I was

foolish enough to take it off, wash my hands, and go off and leave it on a river steamer out in South America. Two years after that it was offered for sale to a friend of mine in Civita Vecchia, and he knew my crest, bought it, and sent it back to me!"

"That is more wonderful still. How in the *world* did it get there?" said Claudia, much interested.

"He tried to find out, but the only thing the jewelers knew or pretended to know about it was that they had bought it of a sailor."

"What a lucky star you must have been born under, to have such things happen to you," said Claudia.

"Not I," said Gerald, a shade of sadness coming over his face.

"Here's Wyn back again," said Claudia, perceiving that he had returned, and was looking, as he felt, rather crestfallen. "They are worse than I thought, and need a patch or two — bring them to me to-night, or when you take them off, and I'll make them 'a'maist as gude as new' — good enough to go fishing in, certainly, with a pocket full of worms," she said to him, turning him around, and inspecting rather anxiously the suit in question.

"*Now* we are all right," said Gerald, when he was back in his place. "I think you were admiring our music, were you not? or were about to admire it when Wyn's enormity checked your enthusiasm," said Gerald, looking up from his work. "Would you like us to give you a song? Pontius, here, will give us the *ut de poitrine*, Ned and Joe will be our *bassi profundi*, the boys will warble the tenor parts. What will you have? Our *répertoire* is not very extensive, I'm afraid. What do you say to the Sewanee River?"

The negroes laughed as if they fully appreciated the humor of Gerald's remarks, and Pontius fired a corn cob at Edmund's head, and got three in return in rapid

succession, which he dodged skillfully, showing every tooth in his head.

"With such stars, I expected to have an operative treat of some kind, but never mind; go on," said Claudia, smiling.

"No. Pontius is rehearsing the 'Tower' song in 'Trovatore,' and '*Ange si pure*' every day, but he is not *quite* ready to present them before so critical an audience, Miss Hyde. His *impresario* objects, too, to premature disclosures; but you can have 'Sewanee.' And, nonsense aside, Ned and Joe sing uncommonly well, as I've been telling them. *Now*, boys, give us 'Sewanee,'" said Gerald, as they all burst into the sweet old song. Gerald got up and came over by Claudia, and they talked *sotto voce* during the performance.

"They do sing well, don't they? I was surprised the first day I heard them. If Ned had five years in Italy, a good many other people would think so. That pickle of a Pontius, too, has a voice like a reed flute; only see the faces he is making. They keep the time and tune perfectly."

"It is a musical race. Ned belongs to the Wyvvern band, and is quite a musical authority, I assure you. His voice is very fine, but, of course, wholly without cultivation."

"I like to hear him."

"So do I. But I would not advise you to get within earshot of the band, though it is the pride of his heart. You would have to go to the White Sulphur for a month to get it out of your system. Pontius is not really a bad boy, though he has the weaknesses of his race, and is terribly full of mischief. He is not at all the companion I covet for the boys, but I can't keep them apart. They go ratting under the haystacks, and hunt 'possums, and 'swap' knives, and ride colts, and there is no helping it, at present."

"It won't hurt them. Boys are all like that," said Gerald.

"I hope not — and I think not, too, for our Southern men have all done the same thing, and no harm has come of it."

"You have a wonderful knack of managing them. I often admire your tact and firmness with them. Your hand is so light on the rein that they scarcely feel it, yet you make them keep to the road, I notice," said Gerald, who was really obliged to get in a little admiration somewhere by this time. "You've made them nice, manly lads."

"I don't know. I am very ambitious for them, and of course I love them — *dearly* — but I am often anxious about them. Edmund is a born cynic; and Wyn is inclined to be lazy, which means dry-rot for body, mind, and soul, though, to be sure, he is affectionate, and will do anything for those he loves; and Charley is very self-willed."

"Edmund told me the other day that 'girls were a humbug, and spent everything they could lay their hands on, in finery — all but Claudia,' quotation marks, Miss Hyde, you understand!" said Gerald, blushing his vivid English blush. "He seems very fond of reading, too — is always curled up in a chair with a book. Wyn will rouse up when he goes off to school, and get rid of his laziness. You are right about its being a bad fault, though."

"*You* are not lazy, at all events," said Claudia.

"Well, fiends weave ropes of sand rather than be idle, you know," replied Gerald.

"Am I to understand that you are a fiend?" said Claudia, rising and laughing.

"Not unless you get in an *r* after the *f*, Miss Hyde, for whatever I may be, I am certainly *that*," said Gerald eagerly.

"You are ingenious," said Claudia.

"I am entirely sincere."

"I think you have proved that."

"Not I; but I hope to. What is that they are singing, now?"

"*That?* 'Dixie,' of course. Do you mean to say you have never heard 'Dixie'? On fifes it is the most inspiring of tunes."

"It's an awfully jolly, catching little thing," said Gerald. "Must you go?"

"I must, indeed. Only hear Wyn! He has no more idea of time or tune than of Choctaw, but he loves to buzz along with the others, and I won't let them tell him or stop it, it would so hurt his feelings."

At this moment Wyn brought out a long note, the like of which, for hoarseness and discord, and utter disregard of anything that resembled music, or could be regarded as such this side of China, was never heard. Claudia and Gerald burst into a fit of laughter, as they looked at each other.

"He seems to be suffering a good deal. Shall I go for a doctor?" asked Gerald.

"No," said Claudia. "It is incurable, but it is not the patient who suffers—good-bye. Industry must be rewarded. I shall go make some soft gingerbread, which, with lemonade, constitutes a 'Bower' orgy. We'll have it after lessons to-night."

Gerald opened the door of the corn crib for her as if it had been the drawing-room *portière* of "The Towers," and Claudia, with a last frank smile, departed.

All that afternoon at tennis, Gerald hummed, sang, or whistled "Dixie," and might have been heard over and over again tunelessly affirming one thing in mellow tones:—

"In Dixie's land I'll take my stand,  
And live and die in Dixie;"

— along with “Chuck up that ball, young ’uns! You don’t suppose that I am going to field for you? Well done, Wyn! Well *done*, Charley! Game and set! Take my bat, Keith, and I’ll teach you how to take a ball. For shame, Charley, teasing the kid like that. You’ll beat them all yet, Keith, take my word for it.”

The “orgy,” too, was such a success that even Mrs. Blunt was inspired to show them how people danced when she was a girl, and, with Cousin Helen for an imaginary male partner (held at an incredible distance from her, “*always in gloves*, my dear”), did the German waltz to a most appreciative audience.

“Do you think that she kept *Mr. Blunt* revolving in space like that, and *always* kept on her gloves?” asked Gerald, in an undertone, of Claudia, seated next to him, with Keith in her arms.

“Can you doubt it for a moment?” replied Claudia gaily.

Gerald blushed and laughed.

Claudia laughed, but did not blush, and went on: “Isn’t it nice to see dear father over there again, after all these weeks?”

“It is, indeed,” replied Gerald earnestly.

Mr. Hyde, ensconced near the fire in his new chair, saw them looking at him, and smiled; a sweet smile to both, for it seemed to come, and did come from a height—a height of pain conquered, a depth of unselfish love.

“We are saying, darling, how nice it is to see you there,” exclaimed Claudia, with a look on her face that Gerald would have died for.

“It is good to be here, daughter,” he replied, and presently was contributing his share to the general fund of amusement, by telling two stories of John Randolph.

“Who was John Randolph?” asked Gerald of Claudia, still in an undertone.

"John Randolph of Roanoke, he means," she replied.

"And who was John Randolph of Roanoke?" he asked.

"Did you never hear of him before?" she replied, turning upon him a look of surprise.

"I never did," confessed Gerald. "Is it very shocking?"

"Very; for he is a Virginian of the Virginians, very brilliant, eccentric, wealthy — a notable figure, both in politics and society — minister to the Court of St. James at one time."

"Oh! really," replied Gerald, and wished that he had given a little attention to the history of the United States in general, and of Virginia in particular.

"I should be more shocked if you were not constantly convicting me of ignorance of other people, countries, and languages," added Claudia.

"I?" began Gerald, and would have launched forth into an eloquent defense of Claudia, and depreciation of himself, but Cousin Miles, who was there, proceeded to cap Mr. Hyde's anecdotes with two stories about Mr. Jefferson, given in a hoarse whisper, after which Cousin Helen repeated a poem of Tupper's.

"I scarcely dare confess it, but I never heard of Mr. Jefferson either. And is Tupper an American poet that I ought to know all about, too?" asked Gerald.

"Did you ever hear of George Washington, Mr. Mildmay?" asked Claudia, very emphatically, but with such kindness in her laughing eyes that Gerald half forgot to answer her for trying to catch it.

"*I have*," he replied, "*and of his hatchet*, but I see that I must take a course of American history."

"And I a course of general European information," replied Claudia; "come, help me make the lemonade."

This they did, and cut the cake, and served every-



body, and laughed at everything, and were very mer  
There was never a merrier party altogether.

“When I think how lonely I have been in crowd  
and how much sham gaiety and humbugging I  
known, how little real pleasure all those balls and *fê*  
and fireworks gave me — I’ve often been ready to ha  
myself almost after them, I know, — and contrast th  
with this evening, I see the truth of the aphorism, ‘  
all men were happy, revelings would cease!’” thoug  
Gerald, as he sat looking into the embers, and smoki  
a solitary, but neither lonely nor sad, last pipe. “H  
good she is to them all. How charming she was  
night. She fits me like a glove, grave or gay. S  
suits me down to the ground; or rather up to t  
skies.”

## CHAPTER XV.

"Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,  
Where, mixed with God's, his loved idea lies."

*Pope.*

It was no small annoyance to Gerald that the men from Butterworth's came so often to look him up at the "Bower." One or other of them was there constantly. They came singly, in twos, threes, and fours. They came for tennis, they came for talk, for walks, for everything and nothing. On good days they came because it was "fine," and on bad ones because the weather was "beastly," and there was "nothing else to do." The Hyde hospitality stood the strain perfectly, but Gerald, finding them received as his friends, invited to stay for dinner, and stopping on for tea, or turning up before breakfast, and settled for the morning, got very restive under it. He spoke to Claudia about it at last:—

"I beg, Miss Hyde, that you will not feel it necessary to be always inviting those fellows to dine and sup and stop," he said; "they have nothing on earth to do, but they can't be doing it here all the time; it is too great a tax upon you."

"But we are very happy to see your friends always," said Claudia. "And if they are content with our modest fare—we don't entertain, but we have our friends with us constantly, as you know."

"But they are *not* my friends—Flanders excepted. That's just it. And you must be sick of them.

Can't you turn a cold shoulder sometimes when they put in an appearance? I wish you would, I'm sure."

"Oh! I couldn't *possibly* do that — *in my own house!*" said Claudia, quite shocked by the proposition. "Besides, they are strangers, and that alone makes a valid claim, and I am sorry for them. From what you tell me they must be very disagreeably placed."

"That is quite true. I also am sorry for them. But I can't have them imposing upon Mr. Hyde. I don't mind their coming sometimes, but I won't let them quarter themselves upon you as they are doing," Gerald insisted.

"Father does n't mind — none of us do — let them come! It is natural that they should, since you are all Englishmen. It must be pleasant, too, for you to see them."

"It is sometimes. We've had some good sport together shooting, lately, when I could get off, but that is not the question. That is all over now, and I can get along very comfortably without them, I assure you, for *five* days in the week," replied Gerald.

"But why is it over? There is still something to shoot, is n't there? Yes, I'm sure there must be."

"Well, to tell you the truth, Miss Hyde, I've sold my gun."

"Have you? Still you can enjoy riding with them."

"I am going to sell my horse next week. Your father allows me the use of one of the farm-horses for riding over the place, and that must suffice me in that line."

Claudia regarded him curiously for a moment. "You mean, then, to have no pleasures?"

"I have not said that. I mean to permit myself no extravagances. I am a poor man, and such luxuries

are for the rich. I have neither time nor money for them — at present."

Claudia was silent for a moment, and then said, "Perhaps, you are right."

"I am sure I am. I only wonder that I did n't see it long ago. I smoked my last cigar yesterday. I shall take to a brierwood pipe and 'Pride of Virginia,' for the remainder of my days. Will you be shocked if I say that I never see that picture on the bag, of 'Virginia,' with her foot on her slain foe, that I don't think of you? I can't say that I am struck by the physical resemblance, but you seem to me the sort of woman who will always be victorious over every enemy; you even inspire me to attack some of mine."

Gerald had privately lectured himself upon the state of his affections, the hopelessness of his attachment. He had determined to be very guarded, and thought he was speaking in the most vague terms, but he left out of account the tone of his voice, the look of his eyes. They were sitting on the big sofa in the hall after breakfast, having been left there by a gradual ebb of the family, that might at any moment become a flow, as Gerald well knew, for it was one of his annoyances.

"It seems to me, on the contrary, that I am always defeated," said Claudia in reply. "Still I am glad if I give you any courage, though I don't see how it is — how I can do you any good."

"You do it chiefly by being you. The unselfishness of your daily life, the constant spectacle of your goodness, your faithfulness to duty, your devotion to your people, has done a great deal for me, I assure you. It has braced my will, and aroused a whole set of dormant faculties, whose existence I did not even suspect. I confess that I have stood self-rebuked before it," said Gerald, looking at the wall opposite.

"You have no need to. When you know me better, my faults and failures will quite do away with any such impression. It is true that I am trying to do my duty, but that stern daughter of the gods is not a very sympathetic companion, though she is a good friend in the main. She flatters none of our foibles, indulges none of our weaknesses. She pays me no compliments, as you are doing, Mr. Mildmay, but shows me every day what I have left undone, half done, or well done from mixed motives, that won't bear examination," said Claudia, in the light tones that often veiled her earnestness.

"There! You prove that I am not paying compliments with every word you say! You know your Dea very well," said Gerald eagerly. "You have just introduced me to her, so that I have but a bowing acquaintance with the divinity, though I hope to know her better. You have made a radical change in my point of view, Miss Hyde, and I insist upon being grateful. I am like a blind man upon whom a certain measure of light has been conferred. My idea of life, for instance, I see, has been ease, enjoyment—the greatest good of a great number—*one!* My past seems to me aimless and profitless. I came out here thinking myself very much of a martyr and victim. I behold in myself, now, something vastly less interesting and not calculated to arouse anybody's sympathies—not even my own, tender as they have been on that score—a selfish brute!"

"You are nothing of the kind!" said Claudia indignantly. "How can you say so? Now you are unjust to yourself as you are mistaken about me."

"Not at all. I find that I have been living altogether for and in myself, that I have never sacrificed myself in the least for anybody, or devoted myself seriously to anything worthy of a moment's consideration."

tion, though I hope my tastes, which have done duty for pursuits, have at least been refined, and my motives not altogether sordid. So you see that you have brought me to a wholesome state of mind at least. This may be all—but I hope not; and I think not, too. I have thrown off my weights, girded my sash close about me, and taken a deep breath, as a Spanish runner does when he enters for a race. I don't mean to ask my people for any help. I have an aunt and some cousins who would do something for me, but I shall not ask it. My uncle offers me nothing, and I must just fight it out."

"I think you are right there, too," said Claudia, with an approving nod. "Montjoie! St. Denis to the rescue! When you are victorious you can carry home your banners and hang them on the outer wall of 'The Towers.' But I would not have you deceive yourself. You will never make a fortune in Virginia farming. A modest competence at best is all you can hope for."

"What do you say to going for a walk this morning? We are not likely to get many more days like this, are we, this late in the year?" replied Gerald irrelevantly, his deep, sweet voice making an appropriation rather than invitation of the request.

"No, indeed! It may snow any day. We will see. I must deserve the fine things you have been saying about me, you see, and this divinity has to cover the sofa on which we are sitting, unfortunately, before she can go off on a pleasure ramble. Only see the state it is in! I don't think it will take me very long, though, and I want some fresh air. I am very fond of walking at this season," replied Claudia. "We always call it the Turkey sofa in the family, because of these mysterious humps and lumps that you see—the bird, not his feathers; it is one of the small jokes of large families. We are attached to it, in spite of

its antiquity and feebleness. We are always seeing who shall not sit on this mountain in the middle."

"The springs are evidently out of place," said Gerald, in an altered tone, feeling this obstruction as he spoke, and critically regarding the sofa. "When you get up, Miss Hyde, I shall turn it over, with your permission, and see if I can't replace them before you begin. I don't profess to understand the internal economy of a sofa, but I can at least look wise, and poke about a bit, and patch it up here and there, as the gentlemen of the medical profession do when things go wrong with us," said Gerald.

He turned it over accordingly, single-handed, though it was a truly monumental structure. Claudia exclaimed at the sight of the dust and spiders and mice-nests thus revealed, and flew off to get the hearth-broom out of the dining-room.

"I'll do it," said Gerald, taking it out of her hand. "Run away out of the dust, for I mean to 'make it fly.'"

When he had done this with a will, he called for "some cotton stuff, hammer and tacks," and, these being furnished, he, with great patience and dexterity, quietly went to work to remedy matters.

This done, he turned it up again and replaced it.

"Will that answer?" he asked.

"Perfectly, you talented person! I'll get my scissors and chintz," said Claudia, much pleased.

"Let me see! I think I can cut the pattern of the thing, and save you getting down on your knees," said Gerald, and forthwith whipped out a tape measure, and by a series of accurate measurements, and careful arithmetical calculations, he did get it "to a hair."

"A man does nothing as a woman does," said Claudia (when he had penciled off the pattern, and given

it to her, saying, "I don't understand about your part of it; should there not be some allowance for seams?" "I should as soon have thought of using a barometer and a compass for the purpose. However, it is perfect, —and I am much indebted. It will take no time at all now."

"I'll tack it on with the braid when you're done, if you like," said Gerald, and Claudia, with great despatch and her usual businesslike devotion to the matter in hand, went to work briskly with her scissors.

"She keeps always her air of womanly dignity, no matter what she is doing. And her naturalness is so delightful and so rare. She is not thinking of me at all," thought Gerald, as he sat watching with quiet satisfaction her graceful movements and womanly tricks as she cut, pieced, contrived, and made little expeditions over to the sofa to fit the various pieces into place, stopping at intervals to rub her forehead with her middle finger, when puzzled, which was one of her little ways when she was thinking intently. He was quite familiar with most of them by this time.

"I've got it out! I was skimped in the matter of chintz. I never do have quite enough of anything, and it exercises my talents so that I can almost get a table-cover out of a pocket handkerchief if you give me enough *time*!" She finally said triumphantly, "Now, I have only to sew it."

She went back to her chair as she spoke, and to her work. But being now at leisure she was at last conscious of his silence, and looking up found his eyes fixed upon her, grave and sweet, all his face softened into tender content.

"Don't look at me. I—it makes me nervous," she said hurriedly. "I never can do anything if people look at me. It is one of my stupid peculiarities," she added, as if by way of atonement. "Sup-



pose you get Thackeray and read me a chapter while I am finishing this. I should like to have some idea of what modern England is like."

"With pleasure," said Gerald, in a matter of fact tone; and he got the book and read the inimitable scene in which Major Pendennis quarrels with Morgan. But Claudia seemed scarcely so sympathetic as usual, and her ordinary sense of humor appeared to be somewhat dulled by her interest in her work, he thought. Twice such delightful points escaped her altogether that Gerald stopped, surprised, and she, seeing this, said, —

"Excuse me. I have done this all wrong, and have to pick it out."

"Cousin Claudia," said Keith, appearing suddenly, slate in hand, "I'm doing figures with Cousin Helen — only she's gone off. What's the number of this day? She told me to make it."

"The date you mean, dear; December the 7th," replied Claudia, and Keith trotted back into the dining-room again, leaving the door open as he went.

"This is ready now, Mr. Mildmay; but I think I can put it on," said Claudia rising, and waving him away.

"You will be sure to mash one of your fingers. Let me do it. You wouldn't like to lose a thumb-nail, would you? I wouldn't have you come down on one of them with this big hammer for a good deal, I know," said Gerald, and took from her the cover. He carried it over to the sofa and without further ado quietly proceeded to tack it in place. It was now Claudia who gravely regarded him.

"Am I not doing it right? Your silence seems rather ominous, Miss Hyde. Don't mind finding fault if the hired man bungles his work! I think I should rather enjoy it than otherwise," said Gerald, looking around at her.

"It is very neat and nice," said Claudia, showing him nevertheless how she wished it done, and laying a fold or two.

"Has anybody ever told you that you have Sir Peter Lely hands?" said Gerald, as she held a pleat in place. "Because you have. You ought to make a point of being painted in the gown of the period playing the harp."

"Put a tack in here. We have a house and sign painter in Wyvvern, and when I sell my turkeys I'll see what can be done," said Claudia, with a sudden return of cheerfulness.

"There you are," said Gerald, the cover in place.

"Did you ever see anything so gorgeous? Wait a moment," replied Claudia, and, darting off, she came back with her gloves on and a cloth, with which she gave the old mahogany "a shine," after which they both sat down on the rejuvenated sofa "to try it," like two happy children.

"Now for a walk," said Gerald gaily, as they stood in the door that led out on the front porch.

"Hello! what's that dog doing?" he suddenly exclaimed, and Claudia, going to the end of the porch, looked out in the direction he pointed.

"He's behaving very curiously," Gerald observed presently. "I don't like it. By Jove! I believe he's mad. *Take care!*" he added, as the dog with a sudden turn dashed up the steps past them and disappeared into the dining-room.

"Keith!" Claudia cried out in horror, and was running down the hall as fast as her feet could carry her, when Gerald overtook her, seized her arm, pushed her into the parlor and closed the door.

"Stay here! I'll get him," he said in a quiet tone, that was yet so charged with meaning and full of command that Claudia obeyed instinctively. He

dashed off and was back almost immediately with Keith in his arms, his eyes brilliant with excitement, but his manner still composed.

"Here he is, all right, Claudia. Now come with me," he said.

He locked Keith in, and drew Claudia out into the hall.

"Stay here and watch. Let *no one* go into the dining-room," he said, and was bounding upstairs before she could reply. He came back pistol in hand, and ran past her into the dining-room. The next moment Claudia heard a pistol shot, and was standing at her post, pale and trembling, when Gerald came out, and joined her, examining his pistol as he approached.

"I've settled him," he said; "I found the brute in the corner foaming at the mouth and snapping at everything, and got my bullet into his head at once. They don't often go mad in winter. Whose dog is it, I wonder?"

"Was he really *mad*?" asked Claudia, feeling a sudden trembling seize her, as she thought of it.

"Undoubtedly, in my judgment. I am afraid I treated you rather cavalierly. But I had to get you out of the way. Pray pardon it. When I had shut the door on the brute I brought you out to keep guard. I knew I could depend on you. I'll run up now and put away my pistol. Luckily it was loaded," said Gerald. He started off and got half way up, then called back:—

"Oh! *the little chap*, shut up in the parlor all this time, Miss Hyde. He'll be in such a fright." He came running back.

Together they opened the door of the parlor where they found the child sitting, scared and forlorn, on one of the stiff old sofas, crying for very desolation and wonder.

"My darling!" cried Claudia, and flew to him and took him in her comforting embrace. "Did you think you were shut up in here and left alone, deserted by everybody? You are all right and safe now! That dog was mad! Mr. Mildmay snatched you away and put you in here to keep you safe while he killed him. He would n't let him hurt my little Keith. Go thank him — kiss him. Go!"

She pushed the wondering child toward him, and sobbed aloud: "Oh! when I think of it! Oh! thank God! thank God!"

She got up and walked backwards and forwards as she spoke. Gerald had never seen her so moved. She stopped finally in front of him. She looked at him earnestly for a moment, and then gave him her hand, without, however, being able to get out a word of thanks, for her tears. Gerald pressed it against his heart involuntarily, then, putting the child off his lap, said: —

"It is nothing — anybody can pull a trigger," and got up and left the room abruptly. He went outside and came upon Ned and Joe running in with sticks and cries in pursuit of the dead dog. They said he had been bitten in July, and belonged to "Pratt, down here," meaning a farmer in the neighborhood. They would have said a good deal more, but Gerald made them come in and carry off the now harmless carcass, cautioning them as to the saliva; he then called mammy to "come make the place tidy again."

This done, he went up to his room, composed as ever, outwardly. "It was an uncommonly narrow escape, that, for the little chap," he thought as he looked at his pistol. "I turned cold when I saw him playing there so innocently and unconsciously under the table, and that brute curled up in the corner — a very narrow escape! But Claudia had a narrower one

just now from being *kissed* ! I caught myself just in time ! I must be more careful." He fell to cleaning the fateful weapon, and stopped once to look with respect at the hand into which she had put hers.

Claudia went to her room, too, just across the hall, and she, too, occupied herself, though in a very different way. She first fell on her knees and stayed there for a long while. She then sat down by the fire and thought it out. "He risked his life — an awful death — how good, how brave, how noble he is ! He makes light of it — he always does. He called me 'Claudia.' He said he could depend on me," were the most salient thoughts. But they were innumerable, for she was sitting face to face with a strange, beautiful creature, a new-born joy, sorrow, dignity that had long been lying silent and dumb in her heart, but now awoke and sprang upon the stage of her life full-grown, and was looking at her in return, and saying softly, in clear, low tones of unspeakable majesty and tenderness in reply to her challenging, "Who art thou ?" — "Claudia, I am known by many names among men : some call me Love ; but I am Life."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"So forcible within my heart I feel the bond of Nature draw me to my own ; my own in thee, for what thou art is mine ; our state cannot be severed ; we are one, one flesh : to lose thee were to lose myself." — *Milton*.

To preserve a perfect balance and moral perpendicular is not an easy thing for a lover to do. Full cups are apt to overflow. Most men in Gerald's position making the attempt are like children, who, in their efforts to stand quite straight and not stoop at all, topple over backward.

Gerald took himself severely to task after the events of the last chapter. He determined to be as guarded as possible, and the essence of discretion. He told himself that it would be dishonorable in the extreme to gain Claudia's affection, since he was not in a position to marry.

The result was that he went altogether too far in one direction to keep himself from taking the other. To Claudia's intense surprise, he came down to tea that night an altered man. For a week she thought the change in his manner must be due either to a mood that would pass, a private annoyance, or some other of the cloud-shadows of life, the little discontents, disappointments, disillusionments that come to us all now and then, and shut out the light for a time. She first noticed that something was wrong when her father gracefully, but without effusiveness, thanked him for "a gallant act," and Mrs. Blunt joined in, and the boys noisily expressed their interest and admiration. He

was almost curt in his disclaimers, and she turned the conversation into other channels, and was relieved when Edmund took occasion to wish that he had some champagne, and that they all had a nicer supper.

"Pindar says that 'water' is the best of all things," was Mr. Hyde's answer. "No, no, my boy! You are better without it. Appease your hunger, but do not long for dainties. Simple nutriment is as good and better than the choicest dishes of the epicure, and water will quench your thirst as well and better than the costliest wines. There is nothing criminal in the indulgence of such tastes, at least in the beginning; but their tendency is certainly animal, and easily leads to abuses that destroy health, principles, and morals. Your chances for health, happiness, and honesty will be very greatly increased, my boy, by eschewing all luxury of dress and daintiness of diet. Moderation always, in comforts even, and occasional austerity, will give a manly tone both to your mind and body; vigor, independence, instead of effeminacy and weakness."

"Well, I'd like to *try* it, father. I notice it is only poor people who think money and luxury such bad things. I'd take a contract to be perfectly happy with a million, I know," insisted Edmund.

"The sunshine of affluence often engenders many reptiles, my son — vices within and sycophants about us; whereas the wise man finds great riches in the practice of virtue and the society of true friends. But to talk *de contemptu mundi* to a lad of your age is lost labor. Only remember what I say. Your own experience will abundantly confirm it. Life is a battle, my boy, and warriors do not concern themselves to provide feather beds on which to sleep soundly, but look to it that their shields are bright and their swords true," said Mr. Hyde.

"You are a poor man, father," insisted Edmund. "If you were rich you'd think differently."

"You are wrong there, my boy. In the first place, I have been a rich man as well as a poor one. In the second, it is the universal experience of our race that it is temperance and self-denial, and not luxury and self-indulgence, which produce that probity and honor, piety and contentment, industry and affectionate concern for the welfare of others which, by making a man a good neighbor, a kind friend, a devoted husband, father, and patriot, insure his obtaining as much happiness as can fall to the lot of any on this planet. Has not your more enlarged intercourse with the world led you to agree with me on this point?" said Mr. Hyde, appealing finally to Gerald.

"I beg pardon; I — I confess that I was not listening," said Gerald, whose eyes had either been bent upon his plate or upon the fork he was twirling.

"Perhaps he is feeling the reaction from this morning," thought Claudia.

There was more talk in which he joined politely, but distantly, and, tea over, he got at lessons as usual with the boys, only with a devotion which altogether precluded his promoting the customary banter, comment, and criticism with which it was generally enlivened. He shaded his eyes a good deal with his hand as he sat there.

"Does your head ache?" asked Claudia, finally, when the evening was nearly over.

"Not at all," replied Gerald quickly.

Next evening it was the same thing, and the next. The change in him so troubled Claudia, whose nature was absolutely frank and unsuspecting, that she took occasion twice to try and clear up the mystery. "I hope you have no bad news?" she said once, and another time: "Have I — have any of us annoyed you



in any way, Mr. Mildmay — unconsciously, of course," and got a "No; thanks for your kind interest," and a "Not in the least, I assure you. Why?"

"Oh! I thought it possible. All families have corners, and, if you had knocked against any of ours, I wished you to know that it was your fault, not ours," Claudia replied, trying to be herself, and expecting a smile in reply.

Finding, however, the barrier still there that evening, and next morning, and the day after, and still unaccounted for, her manner to him perforce lost some part of its spontaneity and cordiality, though she was always kind and courteous. She took her lamp over to another table, now, and worked apart, for one thing, correcting the boys or praising them from afar. She no longer made a third in the talks between Gerald and her father, slipping away unobtrusively to this or that duty of which she had never any lack. Their walks were discontinued by tacit mutual consent, and their talks dwindled to the casual commonplaces of ordinary intercourse; for while there had been no constraint in his relation with the family, there had been no familiarity either, so that it was easy enough to pass into a more formal one with Claudia without creating comment.

Gerald's new departure was therefore a complete success, and he ought to have been perfectly satisfied. But he was n't, he was utterly dissatisfied; impatient of the muzzle with which he had so carefully provided himself, and the strait-waistcoat that girded him so sorely at times; half offended with Claudia for going her cheerful, placid way as usual; yet wholly determined to act up to his very troublesome convictions, at what it might.

If he could have looked below that calm exterior he would have seen Claudia's mind in a state of ferment.

"Is he tired of us? Does he repent of his bargain? Has he heard from that English girl? What is it?" she was asking herself all day long and half the night.

At last one night, a dreadful thought came to her, in casting about for some solution of the mystery. Had he come in contact that day with the dog, and did he fear the result? Was this the secret of his sudden reserve, his sadness, his irritability? Gerald caught her eyes fixed upon him more than once in the week that followed. It seemed a year, the thought was so horrible to her, and she learned in that time the value of that one life to her. When she could bear it no longer, she said to him: —

"I know that you don't like to have that mad dog episode alluded to. But I *must* ask you something. Did you touch the creature at all?"

"No; I shot the brute across the room, and I took precious good care that no one else should. Why do you ask?" said Gerald, surprised.

"Because you are so changed; I thought—I feared," began Claudia, but with all her self-control she could get no further, as her trembling lips warned her. She was sitting in such a position that he could not see her face grow white and then red, but he heard the tremor in her voice.

Gerald was quite silent for a moment, and then he said only, "You are very good," in his quietest manner, and presently left the room.

"I am an idiot," he reflected. "I might have drawn out gradually and kept my secret perfectly well. Her tender heart has been troubled about me, though I am not worthy of her least kind thought. The change was too marked. I must manage better."

The relief was so great to Claudia that her spirits went up with a bound. "If it is n't *that*, I don't care

what it is," she thought; and when they met again each was so glad to be within speaking distance of the other, instead of being separated by whole invisible seas and continents, that the only effect of Gerald's conscientious effort was to draw them nearer to each other than ever, as they both felt.

They had a merry evening with the family, and made some walnut candy with the children after lessons; the light shone only the brighter for this its first eclipse.

Next morning the first deep snow of the season fell and shut them up together "in the tumultuous privacy of storm," and they were more cheerful still. Claudia slipped on her jacket, and a blue hood, and seized a broom after breakfast, the boys and Gerald followed suit, with overcoats and other brooms, and the united forces sent the snow flying off both porches in fine style, Gerald lending himself to it, joining in the fun of it, and adding to it with the zest and heartiness so noticeable in Englishmen, who can all become boys again at a moment's notice. Claudia had often been struck with it in seeing him with the children, and noticed the enviable knack now; it was so evident that he was amused as well as amusing, and was neither immolating himself nor condescending to little men of low estate.

Edmund and Wyn combined forces finally, put each an arm about Claudia, and swept her down the steps at a slide.

"You rascals!" called out Gerald, in alarm. "You'll break her bones!"

"I'm not hurt," replied Claudia reassuringly, struggling to free herself from their grasp.

"If it's snowballing and romps that you are after, I'll give you enough of it! Come on!" exclaimed Gerald with a last bang of his broom against the clattering old railing. He sprang down into the arena as

he spoke, and a game of romps they did all have! The balls came so fast at last, the fun got so furious, that Claudia ran up the steps again, and, laughing and breathless, sought refuge in the house, carrying with her the image of Gerald, agile, fleet of foot, quick of eye, true of hand, a synonym for manliness as he fought for, covered, protected, "the little chap."

"She has a heavy burden of it here. I will do all I can to help her. I can't be formal with Claudia. I might as well try to 'cut' myself, or fight against the odor of a violet," thought Gerald, as, the game done, he walked off to see to his sheepfold, and as he shook down the straw plentifully, and stopped holes carefully with all his own humane care for "the poor dumb things," his thoughts of her grew more and more tender.

After this, Claudia found him all that was bright, and kindly, and friendly. Something she missed — something the eye and ear missed, rather. Nevertheless, her heart rejoiced in a companionship and friendship that every day became more dear and necessary to her, and was somehow fed and nourished through some other channel than the senses, some system of communication imperfectly understood by us, spiritual, "telepathic," *quien sabe?* a common mental aura, certainly supersensible, very likely supernatural — a highly rarefied atmosphere such as lovers, maniacs, poets, and saints can alone breathe, and live. A look, a smile, a word meant for her alone — sometimes a guarded look, a smile that could not be suppressed, a word that no one else understood, made her quite content.

The day before Christmas, Gerald ran up to Baltimore. He came back that night with his dressing-bag stuffed out with parcels, and carrying another parcel in his hand.

"I think I filled your list. I hope I forgot nothing,

Miss Hyde. Your box is out in the buggy; I'll bring it in," he said, by way of greeting to Claudia, whom he met in the hall; and hurried off to his room to hide away a bunch of flowers before going outside.

"I've seen the light under her door very late for two weeks; I'm sure she has been working double tides to get these things," he thought, as he lifted out her box and carried it in to her.

"You are very late. It is after eleven," she said. "You look frozen! Come nearer the fire. I've kept a nice hot supper for you. Auntie and father and the boys have all turned in. Edmund and I mean to fill the stockings, and you can help, if you like. There they all are in a row; Charley's has a hole in it, which I must first darn, lest all my diamonds and pearls and rubies should slip through!"

"It is good to get in. And I do feel rather stiff. A thousand apologies for keeping you, or somebody up, but the Christmas trains are always behindhand. As to the supper, I shall certainly avail myself of your kindness, for I feel positively wolfish. May I help myself forthwith? Whose is that huge black stocking on the right?" said Gerald, approaching the fire.

"That is Pontius's, borrowed from mammy, and hung there by his own fair hands. Edmund! a table, quick!" said Claudia, springing up and getting him a fresh napkin out of the sideboard.

The little repast was seasoned with much cheerful talk, and, when it was over, Claudia went off with Edmund and a lamp, and returned presently with the children's presents, which Gerald took from her.

"Only a few simple little things," she said smiling. "But they are not critical. We'll begin by wrapping the oranges up in fancy paper, so as to give that fictitious charm which an orange in its native state wholly lacks. Everything must be imposingly wrapped and labeled."

"That reminds me that I got them some stuff," said he, and he retired with the lamp.

He came back with his parcels, and laid them down on the table.

"Oh! how kind of you to remember them," cried Claudia, highly pleased, and flushing rose red.

"Not worth your thanks, Miss Hyde. It was my poverty and not my will that consented to such purchases, I assure you. And stop! I've some sweets and jimcracks in the hall. I'll get those, and the hatchet to open the boxes," said Gerald.

"Oh! how delightful!" exclaimed Claudia, as she watched him unpack, with eyes that sparkled with unselfish satisfaction. "Figs, firecrackers, bonbons, fruit, toys, books. Oh! how charmed they'll be! And so am I. I was wondering how I should fill them all, and have been robbing Peter to pay Paul all day, in a vain effort to make sixteen go into six. It was so good of you. Now we shall do *beautifully*, and you must clear away the straw and help me, won't you? Edmund, dear, we are ready to begin."

But Edmund had not heard. He had fallen fast asleep in his chair, his book still clasped to his breast.

"Dear old boy! He is tired out, and has a headache. He has been hunting all day, and had a great deal to do for me beside when he got home," said Claudia; and rising, she tripped quietly behind his chair, gently lowered him into a recumbent position, and tripped back again, stopping to shade his eyes from the light.

She took her seat, and Gerald drew up a chair.

"We must be very quiet and not wake him," she whispered, and Gerald nodded.

"So good of you!" she whispered again, with her own sweet look as she took up the stockings. "There! you can do Keith's, if you like, by way of reward, and I'll begin with Wyn's."

"*I* good? That is a joke. A shade less selfish and a good many degrees happier for knowing somebody who *is* good, if you like. I suppose I may as well begin with eatables of some sort. I know how they appeal to the youthful imagination," whispered Gerald in return.

"Yes," agreed Claudia, smiling. "See how attractively and mysteriously Wyn's begins to bulge already with almonds in the heel, and the toe full of raisins and dates! He will dote on these sleeve-buttons. Another strata of figs and more nuts, you perceive. This pound of citron goes in Pontius's stocking. Where's Edmund's scarf-pin? Oh, there! under your elbow. Do you like it? And his knife?" asked Claudia, who was now at her brightest and busiest. "Here's the comforter I knit for Uncle Beverly. I shall only get a grunt and sour 'Dat for me? What you take dat trouble for me for? *I'se* nobody and nuffin' dese days.' I know that quite well. All the same he will be as proud and pleased as possible. Mammy always says, 'Go 'long, honey. You don' mean dat fur me, shorely? I don't want no presents,' though the first thing she does is to stick her head in the door at daybreak, and shout 'Chris'mas gif', honey!' and she would be heart-broken if she were overlooked."

With many a subdued laugh and whisper the pair worked on in all the intimate seclusion and peculiar expansiveness of Christmas-eve.

Gerald got on very slowly, it must be confessed. His eyes would wander to Claudia's face, which was radiant with joy; to Claudia's nimble fingers wrapping, packing, labeling; to Claudia's slim figure as she rose from time to time and hung each stocking in place with alacrity, and gravely or gaily inspected or altered her own arrangement.

"Give me my baby's stocking! Only half full!"

'Go to the ant, thou sluggard!' Don't they look nice? Thanks to you. Dear things! I only hope we are not making them ill," she said, when Keith's alone was missing from the long row of delightfully distorted legs and feet pendant from the wide old fireplace.

"Shall I ride into Wyvvern and leave a message on the doctor's slate?" queried Gerald. "It's worth a pain under a pinafore to be so completely satisfied once a year, I think. I wish I could buy happiness by the pound, I know."

"It is not to be bought. But I hope God will give it to you as a free gift," said Claudia, *sotto voce*.

"So do I — some day," said Gerald, and sighed as he spoke.

Claudia looked up.

"How selfish I am not to have thought of it before. This is no doubt a sad anniversary for you," she said, snipping off a bit of ribbon from a bolt that was lying on the table near her, covered with all the delightful litter of such occasions. "No doubt you are missing and remembering your own country, kindred, and friends," she said, the heart-tone in her voice, and her face full of gentle sympathy.

"Remembering — yes. I have spent Christmas in so many places — as a man in London at an hotel, at the "Towers" as a gangling school-boy, in Paris ill with typhoid fever, in Pomerania with a large party of Austrians as miserable as I could be, and always as lonely as Crusoe — all the more so for being expected to enjoy myself particularly. I never remember a Christmas in which I was not awfully down in the mouth. No doubt it was partly my fault. I have been thinking so as I have sat here watching your happy face and busy fingers — my selfishness. But as to feeling sad — I don't a bit! I have a good many



people to remember, though there are few enough who trouble themselves to show that they remember me. But there are none to regret. Your sympathy is wasted on me, Miss Hyde. I had a delightful sense of being at home just now, and was getting some idea of what Christmas ought to be, when you set me outside the front door as an alien and a stranger. Do I look very moody to-night?"

"No. But —"

"You thought I ought to be miserable. I can't oblige you, Miss Hyde. I am quite content — happy, in fact. Wish me a happy Christmas, won't you? Other people have done it often enough without result. But I have a kind of feeling that if you would do so —"

He stopped and changed his position.

"I will — I do," said Claudia earnestly. Gerald's handsome face flushed, his eyes shone, he opened his lips as if to speak, then pulled out a handkerchief, ran it through his hands, flicked at his boot.

"Wish me a happy New Year, too," he presently added, in a barely audible tone.

"I will in due season — very many of them," replied Claudia, "this is only the 24th."

"No, now!" pleaded Gerald; "this very moment."

"A happy New Year to you, then, since you insist," said Claudia.

"Thank you," said Gerald, and held out his hand, in which Claudia put hers, thimble, ribbon, and all, for a moment.

The thimble fell off in his palm as she did so, and, seizing it, he gaily tossed it up in the air, saying, with a complete change of tone: —

"I'll keep this. I need a thimble badly with which to sew on my bachelor buttons. I like it better than the bit of leather I have been using so much."

"Mammy will lend you hers, and it will fit you nicely. Return mine instantly, sir. You might as well take my eyes!" said Claudia, holding out her fingers.

"Possession is nine tenths of the law. Come, let us treat," said Gerald.

"My thimble, please."

"A kingdom for a thimble?"

"No, nothing whatever. Instant restitution of stolen property is my demand," Claudia laughingly insisted, and Gerald, having privately kissed it — making an excuse of mending the fire in order to do so behind her back — replaced it on her outstretched finger, saying: —

"You are a flint, Miss Hyde — a flint with a most deceptive air of being soft, and ductile, and malleable. Come, stop! You look so tired."

"Take a bonbon instead," said Claudia, smiling; and they both ate some candy and worked on and talked on until the fire burned low; until they had shown each other their gifts for "Father and auntie and Cousin Helen;" until the table was cleared, and the room set in order by Gerald. Edmund awoke with a start, and the three parted with a last "Happy Christmas!" that was much more than a conventional salutation to two of them, at least.

Gerald was awakened at daylight by the boys' shrieks of delight over their stockings, smiled, turned over for a nap, was finally roused by Uncle Beverly bearing an eggnog, "Wid Marse Addison's compliments, sah." He dressed in all haste, and got down late, barely in time to put a little gift on every plate except Claudia's. No one noticed the omission in the multiplicity of the parcels, except Claudia, who felt very blank over it. Gerald received from her a tobacco-pouch.

"Is this beautiful embroidery yours?" he asked, and looked at it for a moment very intently before slipping it into his pocket.

Leaving the table, he stood near the fire for some time, hearing all the exclamations of delight, the general hubbub of the scene, and watching the pleasure and caresses given and received. Claudia, in consequence of serving them all, was belated over her breakfast; and when the party broke up to get ready for church, and they were left alone, Gerald laid a bunch of violets down by her and a sketch of his own, which, on examination, she found to be "My Lady's Bower."

"You are so fond of flowers and of your home; I hoped you might be pleased," he said; "I took it from the brow of the hill."

"Nothing could have given me half the pleasure. I have so often wished for a picture of the place. How well you've got the south porch, and the doves, and the terrace. I don't know how to thank you, but you must see that I am delighted," she replied, and turned toward him a face so bright with joy that he had no difficulty whatever in believing her.

When Claudia came down dressed for church, Gerald instantly looked to see whether she was wearing any of his flowers. She was, but they were pinned inside her gown, and his face fell until she looked at him and smiled. And then they all rode off in the capacious old coach together, Mr. Hyde excepted, and Gerald recalled his first glimpse of it. He sat in the same row with them at church, and took more than one glance at a profile with which he ought to have been quite familiar, and as he did so the spirit of the sweet Day of Days crept into his heart as it had never done before in all his life; it was so simple and credible and beautiful that there should be divine love, and a pure virgin, and a little child lying in a manger.

At dusk he set off some fireworks for the boys, which they vastly enjoyed; they dined late, and Uncle Beverly was very imposing on the occasion, and decidedly stern, as if feeling that Christmas was an institution largely dependent upon him for support, while Pontius upset the boys' gravity three times by his impish slinkings in and out of the pantry, his grimaces and his glee.

Claudia asked Gerald to sing *Ange si pure*, and the "Tower" song for her when they got into the parlor, having long privately wished to hear them, and listened with all her heart as well as ears. Two hours of round games followed, in which all the family joined, with a simple zest that resulted in much merriment, after which came Uncle Beverly with the big silver bowl full of hot Bermondsey punch and Cousin Helen's huge fruit-cake. This cheerful episode ended with their all drinking in turn from "the old Egerton loving-cup" (a family heirloom), gathered around the fire. Gerald then begged Claudia to recite something for them, confessing that he had overheard her doing so already. Mr. Hyde called out, "Let it be *Astrophel and Stella*, daughter," whereupon Claudia, without the smallest affectation, began in cheerful, musical tones, —

"When my good angel guides me to the place  
Where all my good I do in *Stella* see;"

and recited four or five of the sonnets with the utmost ease, and grace, and charm, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes fixed on the fire. She ended with —

"I might ! unhappie word ! I might ;"

and when she reached the concluding lines, —

"O punished eyes !  
That I had been more foolish or more wise,"

Gerald not only applauded her, but went over and took a chair by her, and told her, in terms so enthusiastic,

what pleasure she had given him, and what a gift she had for recitation, that she was taken quite aback.

"It is such a rare and charming accomplishment," he said in conclusion. "Who taught you?"

"No one. I never knew before that I had a single gift or accomplishment. But I've been learning and repeating poetry all my life. All the same, I know I don't deserve half you've said," she replied.

And Gerald the prudent could not help it. He dropped his voice and quoted, —

"Not thee by praise, but praise in thee is raise :  
It is a praise to praise when *thou* art praise."

"Socrates," said Mr. Hyde, in his calm philosophical style, leaning back in his chair, and regarding them both benignly — "Socrates thought that poets, like flute-girls, should not be admitted into the company of the refined. But I think we have disproved the slander."

"It is no wonder that it was accounted a sin for any gentleman of quality to appear gaudily dressed at court for some time after Sidney's death," remarked Mrs. Blunt; and forthwith she and Mr. Hyde fell to talking of Wootton and Sir William Cecil, and other of Sidney's contemporaries, as if they were Gladstone and Parnell, and their lives the current gossip of the day.

"What makes your face so red, Mysie? It's just like Ada's," Keith innocently demanded, attempting to clamber up in Claudia's lap.

"Nonsense, dear," said Claudia, as she received him, and got pinker than ever, for was not Gerald looking at her? She carried the war into the enemy's country by tickling Keith vigorously, and then, rising, went over to the piano.

"We are all rank Jacobites here, you know," she said, seating herself. "Come, boys, let's have some songs."

"Do you play?" asked Gerald astonished.

She shook her head as she picked out some chords. She managed a simple accompaniment, and they sang first, "Charley over the water," then "The king shall have his own again;" finally, "Come draw me a tankard, good mine host," Gerald joining in the taking chorus:—

"Sing hey! sing ho! for the Cavaliers,  
Sing hey! sing ho! for the Crown,  
Gentlemen out and out and out,  
We'll ride the Roundheads down—  
Down, down, down, down,—  
We'll ride the Roundheads down."

"I suppose you are perfectly well aware that the Roundheads have ridden *you* down," said Gerald, smiling, as a posse of the boys bore Claudia back to her seat.

"Oh! perfectly!" laughed Claudia, "but our Roundheads are not like yours. They have treated us very differently, and we are all good friends now, you know."

Keith had climbed back into her lap in spite of her warning, "You ought to be in bed, young gentleman!"

They all again made a circle about the glorious wood fire, which sparkled and glowed and leaped high under the fanciful wreaths of the high-shouldered old mantel-piece.

"Might we not have some more poems?" asked Gerald. "Do you know any more?"

"Perhaps," said Claudia dubiously.

"Oh! you Hydra and she-sophist," cried Mr. Hyde. "Mr. Mildmay, she knows dozens of them! Daughter Claudia, begin with the 'Vicar of Bray,' and 'Oh! Nancy, wilt thou go with me?'"

So Claudia, again fixing her eyes on the fire, repeated both; went on without being prompted to Ben Jonson's "Sweet Neglect," and Heywood's "Message to Phyllis."

Gerald drew in his chair a little and bent forward, resting his arm on his knee, and his head on his hand.

"Give me a look, give me a face  
That makes simplicity a grace,  
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free,  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all the adulteries of art  
That strike mine eyes, but not my heart,"

repeated Claudia.

"I've such a look and face before me," thought Gerald.

"Say, 'tis her lover true  
That sendeth love to you, to you,"

repeated Claudia.

"That sendeth love to you, to you," thought Gerald, stealing a look at her.

"Repeat 'An old courtier and a new,' dear," said Mrs. Blunt, and Claudia, with great spirit, reeled it off in the most delightful fashion; and followed it with Herrick's "Christmas Eve," which, together, put them all in good spirits.

"Are you tired, daughter? If not, say my favorite, 'Death's Final Conquest,'" said Mr. Hyde.

"The lamp's going out," cried Cousin Helen; "shall I get another?"

"No, never mind, we shall be breaking up before very long," decided Mrs. Blunt. "Go on, Claudia."

Gravely and sweetly Claudia complied, and everybody felt attuned to the measure before she had done.

"Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

"A fine thing, that! Don't you think so, Mr. Mildmay?" said Mr. Hyde.

"Father is speaking to you," said Claudia, turning to him.

"I—I beg pardon! Yes, of course," remarked

Gerald, drawn back to common earth. "Remarkable. Have you no favorites, Miss Hyde?"

"Oh! yes," replied Claudia, "a great many. Here's one: Carew's 'Unfading Beauty.'"

The back log broke now and came tumbling down, for which Gerald was grateful, for the sweet face that he loved had got into the shadow.

"But a smooth and steadfast mind,  
Gentle thoughts and calm desires  
Kindle never-dying fires.  
Where these are not, I despise  
Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes,"

repeated Claudia, with Keith asleep, fast clasped in her arms.

The light waxed dim again, and under the friendly cover, Claudia, with the sweetest thrill of feeling in her voice, closed with these lines to the sun:—

"But tell me, glorious lamp, in thy survey  
Of things below thee, what did not decay  
By age to weakness? I since that have seen  
The rose bud forth and fade, the tree grow green  
And wither, and the beauty of the field with winter wrinkled.  
Even thyself doth yield  
Something to time, and to thy grave fall nigher, —  
But virtuous love is one sweet endless fire."

Englishman though he was, Gerald took up in the darkness the hem of Claudia's gown and kissed it.

"Come, my children! It must be late, and we've had a tiring day," said Mr. Hyde, rising.

Edmund gave the fire a punch that resulted in a blaze, and yawned prodigiously.

"Charley and Wyn have slipped off," remarked Cousin Helen.

"Give me the child," said Gerald, and, as he took Keith out of her arms, Claudia, looking up, saw in his face, and heard in his voice, the missing quantity of the day they had mended the sofa. "Good-night, and thanks for a happy Christmas," he added, and bore Keith off upstairs.



## CHAPTER XVII.

"Ah, wasteful woman! — she who may  
On her sweet self set her own price,  
Knowing he cannot choose but pay —  
How has she cheapened Paradise!  
How given for nought her priceless gift!  
How spoiled the bread and spilled the wine,  
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,  
Had made brutes men, and men divine!"

EARLY in January, Gerald came one morning upon a family conclave in the dining-room, and if he had been one of them he would have marched in, when he opened the door, and have said, "What's the matter?" instead of closing it again hastily with "*I beg your pardon.*"

However, he was not long left in doubt as to what it meant, for almost immediately Claudia came out and begged that he would join them, saying: —

"We have heard from Ada. She is engaged to be married. We were talking it over."

"Oh! Really! I suppose it is n't as sudden as it sounds; no doubt you have all been in the secret for some time," said Gerald, much interested, following her into the now empty room.

"No. This is the first we have heard of it, and it has quite taken our breath away," said Claudia, as they took their seats.

"Was not Mr. Hyde consulted?"

"No; he ought to have been, of course, — dear old daddy! he is quite hurt about it. But Ada is very impulsive, and has taken the matter entirely into her own hands."

"Really!" said Gerald, finding it impossible either to approve, or in that company to disapprove of such "extraordinary conduct." "Do you know the man?"

"We know of his family. They are excellent people — not exactly, hardly — what shall I say?"

"Not quite what you would have preferred in point of family?" suggested Gerald.

"Exactly. Auntie is not at all pleased. But Aunt Emma thinks very highly of him, and her husband, Uncle Joe, writes that he is 'as steady as a wheel-horse.'"

"All the better for that," remarked Gerald, with a touch of British frankness; and then he added quickly, "It is the tortoise-men who win all the races, you know; the senior wranglers, and prize-men, and wits, and geniuses, are outstripped by them every day."

"His family, too, seem ready to receive her with open arms, and that is so much."

"A great deal; in this country, especially. With us it does n't matter much."

"Best of all, he is very good, though not exactly in our way, for he is not a Churchman — a Presbyterian. Aunt Emma says he is a sincere Christian, however, and that is in itself the best guarantee for her happiness. No man can be that, and not be at heart a gentleman in the best and truest sense. I have often thought myself that only the gifts of God can make any man a gentleman, whatever his advantages of birth and fortune may be, and only the grace of God can keep him one," said Claudia simply.

"What friends you and Charles would be," said Gerald, looking tenderly into the eyes that were such clear homes of love and truth. "Altogether, I should think you ought to be very hopeful and content, and I am satisfied all these conditions will bring happiness."

"Oh! I do *hope* she will be satisfied, too — happy, I

mean," said Claudia, repressing in her turn the cat trying to spring out of the bag. "It is such an awful thing to do under any circumstances."

"But you have not mentioned the very first consideration of all, the only essential and vital condition in an affair of the kind!" said Gerald lightly.

"Well, of course, I can't judge of that, because I have n't seen them together, but Aunt Emma says they seem very fond of each other. She says he is devoted to Ada."

"Oh! I was talking of *money*!"

"You consider *that* the vital question, the first consideration!" exclaimed Claudia, so indignantly that he hastened to explain.

"I did n't say that I did. But many people so regard it. I've known girls who would marry Mephistopheles himself if he had a great fortune, and assure you that they never knew what love was until they saw dear Mephisto's horns and hoofs, 'so unique and charming.'"

"I am sorry to think that you think there are such women in the world. I don't believe there are," said Claudia gravely. "Please don't talk in that way. I don't know anything about what is called the great world. I've lived in this little one all my life, but I am *sure* it can't be so bad as that. I have often wished that I did know the world better; my horizon is so circumscribed."

"Well, for Heaven's sake, wish nothing of the sort! It is only penury of thought, and narrowness of view, and petty aims that circumscribe lives. You are far better as you are. The purest knowledge of that world taints. Be thankful, as I am, that your lot has been cast in this secluded place," said Gerald with warmth.

"But I feel so ignorant sometimes, when I hear of

all these modern societies for culture and improvement, and all the 'missions' and 'movements,' and 'higher planes,' and all that," said Claudia, smiling.

"They have almost improved women like you off the face of the earth, I am sorry to say. So far from being ignorant, you are the best educated woman I know; the most intelligent, if not the most learned; and you could n't live on a higher plane than you do, Miss Hyde, unless you took to yourself wings, and floated out of that window, and up indefinitely to Mars or Jupiter, to which I for one have a decided objection, my supply of friends being low at present, like all my other supplies," said Gerald, with great warmth and sincerity.

"Now you must be 'chaffing' me! Why, I was never at school in my life! Father and auntie have taught me the little I know," said Claudia, with a laugh. "And as for *wings* — how *can* you laugh at me so unkindly?"

"I was never more in earnest. We'll give them up, though, if you object. That was a flight of my own fancy. I only meant that a woman cannot be more than womanly. Is the prospective brother-in-law rich?"

"Not rich, but comfortably placed. He has a nice farm in Maryland. They are coming down to-night. I must go and see to the rooms."

"And I have a fence to mend. I am glad your sister is doing so well."

"I hope so."

"Why do you speak so dubiously? Are you anxious at heart about it?" said Gerald, getting up and searching in the tool-drawer for some nails.

"No — that is, yes; a little. Ada's judgment is not so good as her heart. She has been one of my anxieties all her life. She is so very pretty and — so impulsive. To guide, to guard her is — difficult some-

times," said Claudia, family pride struggling with the confidence which would give itself to Gerald.

"I see. Well, the Presbyterian gentleman will take 'the government upon his shoulder,' now. That Biblical phrase is a fact repeated to this day in the East. I saw a Jewish wedding when I was in Damascus, and the father gave to the groom a naked sword which he stretched out over the bride. From that moment her father had no further control over her, and it was supposed to be optional with her whether she should have another master or not. However, she gave the groom as roguish a glance as you ever saw, and marched under the sword and took her place at his side as pleased as Punch, apparently, while he caught the tip of her wedding-veil and drew it around his other shoulder."

"Was she pretty? I can't be properly interested until I know," said Claudia.

"Quite lovely; but he was a frowsy, hideous chap, peckmarked, and not over-clean, I thought. Where *is* that hammer? Ah! here it is."

"Now, you've spoilt it all, and can go," cried Claudia.

"I'm off!" said Gerald, flourishing the hammer at her, and he was.

Gerald went to the station that afternoon and found the engaged ones already arrived — Ada very languishing and affected in her manner to him, very capricious and exacting in her treatment of the tall young man in her toils, for whom she invented enough errands to have briskly occupied three men.

Gerald came willingly to his aid, and got her away from the station at last, with all her bundles and parcels and boxes safely stowed in the carriage, and made a patient if amused audience for her while she played the *rôle* of the fascinating affianced during their five miles' drive.

"Claudia has tears in her eyes," thought Gerald, as he watched their meeting, and noted the languid coquettishness with which she received the embraces and congratulations of her family. "But she has not a trace of gravity or tenderness about her." He was much struck, too, by the warmth and kindness of the welcome accorded Mr. Roder, and the quiet, sensible way in which he behaved during the rather trying ordeal.

"His under-jaw looks hopeful," he thought. "In three years I should n't be surprised if he had taken most of the nonsense out of her. No mortal power could take it all. Just now, of course, he is at her mercy. The courage of some men passes comprehension! *Vous l'avez voulu, George Dandin* ; but, upon my honor, I don't envy you!"

While Ada was looking as engaged as she very well could, and gesticulating in a way to show off her ring to the greatest possible advantage, Mr. Hyde took Alfred Roder off for a private talk, and returned looking satisfied, and leaning on his arm.

Breakfast was scarcely over next morning before Hargreaves sauntered lazily into the dining-room. He came back to tea that night, by Ada's invitation, and they spent half the evening in the corner, whispering and giggling together, while Claudia entertained Alfred Roder. Next day the latter went back to his work, as he plainly declared, saying that as they were to be married in a month there was no need for him to "dangle around any longer."

And now Gerald almost lost sight of Claudia in the whirlwind of a trousseau. She seemed too busy to talk to anybody. She had scarcely an ear for the boys, who were always trying to waylay her, and confer with her as usual about all their plans and purposes. She was always occupied with her stuffs and patterns, and sewing machine, and looked more tired and worried every day to one pair of eyes.

"What has become of you? Are n't you doing t much?" he asked her at last, meeting her in the ha  
"Have you vanished into space? Is it necessary fo woman to have a house full of millinery before she c marry a simple fellow like Roder, who is color-blir for he told me so, and, if he were not, would n't know o gown from another? Do put it all up, and come c with me for a spin! I don't like to see you so pale, you will allow me to say so."

"*Impossible* — utterly so," cried Claudia. "wedding takes precedence of everything, you see, a there is so much to do. Cousin Helen is very kind, t needs me at every turn. We can't afford dressmake you know. But I will promise you this: when t last guest has rolled away in the last carriage on t fateful day, I shall not go to bed, which is what mc female relatives do under the circumstances; and : wonder! I will go for a walk with you, instea Good-bye until then, though. Oh! if you were only tailor, and could make button-holes! Twenty-six f this dress alone! Think of it!"

"I do think of it, for I know who makes them al and who never thinks of herself by any chance," sa Gerald; and took himself off, having taken all the ti and half the worry out of the heart and mind of a lad who smilingly stitched away all the day and half th night on the strength of a word of sympathy from th right quarter.

Ada, meanwhile, was not pressed for time in th least. She could give hours to talking with Mr. Ha greaves, a whole afternoon to walking with him, an rarely had a needle in her hand, greatly to Gerald' disgust. She grumbled even at being fitted, unti Claudia gave her a spirited rebuke, and insisted on he taking some share in her own work. The week bef or the wedding came, and, passing through the hall on

morning, Gerald came upon Hargreaves and Ada. They were sitting on the Turkey sofa. They had a newspaper spread out before them, and seemed to be very much engaged in reading it. Gerald's open door, however, sent a gust in that direction that lifted the paper up and deposited it on the floor beyond, making it perfectly evident that Hargreaves was holding Ada's hand under its cover. Ada tittered, and snatched her hand away. Hargreaves looked the sneak that he felt as he met Gerald's scowl, and then threw himself back and "guffawed," as he would have said. As for Gerald, he went outside, and there quietly waited until Hargreaves had finished his visit and taken leave. He joined him. A short, but extremely stormy interview between the two men followed, beginning with Gerald's "What do you mean by such conduct? I thought you had retained some of the instincts of a gentleman;" and ending with Hargreaves's "I'll not be taken to task by you. What business is it of yours, if I choose to amuse myself with a pretty fool who would flirt with a broomstick? I shall do as I please!"

"I shall make it my business, as you will see, if you show your face in this house again," replied Gerald, in great if repressed wrath, and Hargreaves went his furious way.

Now it chanced that Claudia, from the landing of the stairs, on her way to ask Ada some question, had seen this painful scene, too; so that when Gerald returned he came upon the sisters in the hall. He saw from Ada's sullen, flushed face that there had been a scene. And could that be Claudia moving down the hall with such a look and bearing as he had never seen in any woman, lightning in her eyes, and a majesty of outraged womanhood in every line of her figure? He wished himself anywhere else, and fled from the sight as fast as he could, but Claudia had seen him, and burst



into a passion of weeping as she cast herself down on the stairs.

Two days afterwards, Hargreaves actually had the hardihood and effrontery to call at "The Bower" and ask for Ada alone, as he had been in the habit of doing. In justice to him, it is only fair to say that he was not himself. He was received by Claudia, who simply excused Ada, saying that she was too much engaged to see any one until after her marriage.

"Oh, she'll see *me* fast enough," said Hargreaves. "We understand each other."

He laughed fatuously as he spoke.

"She can see no one," replied Claudia with dignity.

"Oh! you are the one, are you? You are interfering in this, are you? You need n't pretend it is your sister, because it won't go down. You can't gammon me. I'm tired of your confounded airs—giving me two fingers whenever I come here! You'd be glad enough of a little flirtation yourself, I daresay, if you could have it—with a fellow like Mildmay, say."

"Go away, please," said Claudia, much alarmed by this time, for if she had been in doubt as to his condition when he came, she was now fully aware of it, and she was more afraid of a tipsy man than of a raging lion.

"You be ——!" shouted Hargreaves, rising and approaching her with a threatening gesture, hunt-crop in hand.

At this precise moment the quaking Claudia heard a sudden rush from the next room, and in one more Gerald had kicked Hargreaves out of the house and down the steps with a quietness, a swiftness, an accuracy of aim, and heartiness of intention not often witnessed in any circle, polite or pugilistic. He picked up the offender's hat, which had rolled under the piano, and threw that out after him, without a word, shut the door and locked it, and returned to the chair and newspaper

in which he had been ensconced and interested when the sound of raised voices reached him. He half turned his back on Claudia even, still without speaking; the hands that held the paper trembled, and his frown, his eyes, were more terrible to her than even Hargreaves's. Claudia had found out "what would excite him."

Not daring to speak to him, she slipped away, and left him to recover his customary composure. Neither of them alluded to the subject for many a day, and they had no opportunity to do so on that one.

It had been raining "cousins" for a month past, and that afternoon a pleasant instalment of bridesmaids, six in all, and all cousins of Ada and each other, took possession of the house — every one of them sweet, pretty girls, with low voices and gentle manners, and with but one thought among them all, *matrimony*. They chatted matrimony, and gushed it, and giggled it, and blushed it, and discussed it in all its possible and impossible bearings, aspects, and tenses, past, present, and future, all day long (and for the greater part of the night), to Gerald's great amusement.

They separated him from Claudia more effectually than the Great Wall of China could have done. Or was she hiding behind them? They were by no means averse to the society of the handsome stranger, who was very polite, but rather *distract*. Their pretty faces, ways, and clothes, their dimples, smiles, wiles, bright sallies, and charming audacities were but wasted ammunition in that conflict. All six discovered this fact before they had been in the house twenty-four hours, and three of them had found out who was spiking their guns, for all his reserve.

They hailed with delight the arrival of more cousins, first, second, third, fourth, fiftieth; men, this time, and more susceptible to sentimental batteries than some other people. "Pleasant, gentlemanly fellows," Gerald thought, and found them so.

They all rose up, as one woman almost, to welcome the best-looking and most attractive of the batch as "Cousin Willard."

"And who is Cousin Willard?" asked Gerald, struggling in a hopeless network of relations and relationships, of Amy Blunt, who sat next him.

"Has Claudia never mentioned *Willard Guest* to you?" she replied, with much emphasis.

"I've heard them speak of him," said Gerald, studiously impersonal.

"I should think so, indeed! He's been in love with Claudia for years. I suppose it will be her turn next," said Miss Blunt, as studiously personal in her desire to verify her suspicions.

"Really!" said Gerald. "She told me that he was 'the only rich relative she had left, and that she had an honest pride in him as such,' but I had not heard of their engagement."

"I've not said they were engaged, though most people think they are — but still while there's life there's hope," said Miss Blunt.

"I beg your pardon?" said Gerald, looking utterly at sea.

"For Willard, I mean," said Miss Blunt disingenuously to him; and to herself, "*I knew it.*"

Other cousins came and cooked the wedding breakfast, or rather helped to cook it, or brought dainties prepared at home, together with pretty things to adorn the table. Many of these properties, in the way of old china, candelabra, or fine silver, were as well known as the families that owned them, and figured regularly at every entertainment in the county. Professed cooks, professional caterers, were unknown in the community; and the civilized idea of Mrs. Jones's feast as primarily an opportunity to outshine, utterly extinguish, or rival that of Mrs. Brown, was quite unheard of. It was

replaced by a kindly desire and determination to make every such affair a success, and by this simple arithmetic of added sympathy, compound interest, divided responsibility, and subtracted envy, jealousy, and vanity, the happiness of all concerned was so incalculably increased that the result was invariably a delightful gathering.

Still other cousins came and declared their intention of laying the table. But not wishing to be regarded as "pompious and usurpious," with that affectionate consideration for Uncle Beverly's feelings and jealous authority so characteristic of Southern gentlefolk, they one and all, with Claudia at their head, subjected themselves respectfully to his guidance, consulted him about everything, and proceeded to arrange the feast under his imaginary supervision. From that moment the institution of matrimony received the stamp of Uncle Beverly's official approval. It had already received a qualified one so far as this match was concerned, when Mr. Hyde sent for him and virtually asked his consent, which was given with becoming caution and formality.

He now moved majestically about the dining-room, with a high sense of his responsibilities, one moment all flame and fury towards Pontius and the boys, the next all affability for "dee company," and every inch a Hyde. He even made the greatest efforts to give to his features that festive expression which he felt they ought to wear, and produced a puckered, protestant counterfeit of joy, a striking protest against all painful conventions, and a great contrast to mammy's beaming satisfaction.

Three more cousins dressed the bride, and a fourth pinned on her veil.

All the cousins now got into carriages (except a cousin recently widowed, who stayed to take charge of the house, and see that all should be ready against their

return), and tangled themselves up, and disentangled themselves, and finally got off.

A second cousin, "once removed," acted as best-man to Mr. Roder; his cousin this time.

A double-first cousin, a bishop, performed the ceremony in a church filled chiefly with cousins; and mammy walked proudly up the aisle carrying "her child's train," after which the whole party adjourned to "The Bower," and made very merry, indeed.

One shy glance did Gerald get in front of the altar while the service was going on (he had been trying to get one all day), after which Cousin Willard bore Claudia off down the aisle.

When Mr. Roder's firmness, as indicated by his lower jaw, had been brought to bear upon, and had duly affected his wife's movements sufficiently to take her away from two ushers, and Mr. Flanders, and three cousins, in order that they might catch their train, Gerald, just outside the door, overheard the parting between the sisters, just inside of it: —

"Thank you for all your trouble, darling; and you need n't have made such a fuss about a little flirtation," said Mrs. Roder.

"There *are* no little flirtations, dear. They are great follies for a girl, and always degrade her more or less. And for a married woman they are deadly *sins*. Promise me, Ada, that you will never *look* at any man but your husband, never! Be a good, true, sweet wife to Alfred all your life long, darling. Good-bye! good-bye!" said Claudia, embracing her.

"I will, Claudia; I will, indeed!" promised Mrs. Roder, and embraced her in turn.

When everybody had gone, and it took as usual the longest time to get all the farewells spoken, Gerald walked up to Claudia, and said, "Do you remember your promise? Now that the fire is out and the en-

gines have gone home, shall we go for a walk, or are you too tired? You are as white as *this*," showing the handkerchief crumpled up in his hand.

Claudia looked doubtful for a moment, and then said, "Cousin Helen, will you take charge of this shattered establishment? Father, dear, will you go and lie down? I'll run up and change my dress."

"And I," said Gerald, and in a few minutes they both came down in every-day garb.

"You were very splendid in your grand gown. But I like you best so," said Gerald, inspecting her. "You are essentially a girl meant for 'human nature's daily food.'"

"I am so glad it is all over! I think with you that I was not born for society. I love companionship, but one can't get that in a crowd," she replied.

He called his dogs, and took possession of her umbrella (and it seemed a mute appropriation of her as well, as they both felt), and they walked away slowly together, out into the lovely country, with its wide, peaceable horizons, and its delicious February air, full of delicate, virginal suggestions of spring. They talked very little, very quietly, of the wedding chiefly, and then of quite impersonal matters, but in ten minutes all the fever and disquiet of the past month had faded into the sweetest restfulness and peace.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man."

*Pope.*

CLAUDIA went away and spent ten days with the Egertons after this, and Gerald missed her most woefully. That light step, that cheerful presence gone, and oh! the difference.

That wise, merry tongue, whose talk was never labored or stilted, silenced, the halls at "The Bower" echoed as hollow as a vault. Claudia's unaffected interest in all the little events and occurrences of their daily life, and her share in them, and her piquant comments on them, her way of translating them into another tongue, as it were, by her humor and good humor, he now saw had made them delightful, for without her he had no relish for them.

He sat by the fire and smoked a great many pipes after his work was done, and wondered whether she would ever marry her cousin, and asked himself why he had ever allowed it "to come to this," though she should do nothing of the kind. He picked up a book and saw in it only some things that he would have liked to discuss with her.

"Not a drawing-room topic exactly," he thought; "but her pure simplicity is so different from the impossible innocence of the French *jeune fille*. She is a companion for a man, and a conscience, and a friend. And what a wife she would make for a man who wanted a wife. Not a philanthropist, or a

beauty, or a belle, or a celebrity, or a fortune, but just a tender, modest, charming wife of his own, and all his own — a woman without fads, or isms, or cranks, who would love her husband and make him happy, and her home, and make it lovely — a home, and not a club — a woman to spend a thousand years with, and wish for a million more! I suppose she will marry her cousin, an attractive fellow, and rich."

He bounced about on his seat as he arrived at this most uncomfortable conclusion, and Mrs. Blunt coming in, they were soon speaking of Claudia.

"It seems odd to have Miss Hyde away," said Gerald, to begin with, and then Mrs. Blunt went on to tell him a great deal about her; of how she might have spent all her winters in Baltimore with her aunt, but had preferred to stay with her, father; of how she had taken every penny of her little fortune and paid her brother's debts; of how she might retrieve everything by marrying Willard Guest.

"It is just what I should have expected of Miss Hyde," said Gerald. "Do you think she will marry him?"

"Who can tell what a girl will do or where lightning will strike? I get out of all patience with her sometimes," said Mrs. Blunt, with asperity.

"He would certainly be a fortunate man, and should be satisfied with his luck," said Gerald, with studied carelessness.

"A man wants very little in his marriage — only a wife who shall always be young, beautiful, fascinating, rich, well-dressed, healthy, and amiable, from seventeen to seventy. That is what he secretly expects of his wife, — yes! all of you!" said Mrs. Blunt, with her caustic smile.

"You are very hard on us, there, Mrs. Blunt," replied Gerald, laughing. "Let us hope that your niece will decline Mr. Guest with thanks."



"She *has* — three times! But all the Guests are as obstinate as — the Guests; nothing can be more so. And he won't give her up. It will all come right, I think. Did you observe the way in which she treated him at the wedding? I've been telling Brother Addison that I think there is some private understanding between them."

On hearing this, Gerald would certainly have groaned aloud — for it hurts to have a dagger thrust into the heart of one's heart — if such luxuries as honest feeling honestly expressed, and natural disgust venting itself naturally, were known in polite society.

"I did not notice," said Gerald faintly.

"I have never seen her as cordial to him; usually she frowns decidedly upon him as a suitor — as a cousin she is, of course, always what a kinswoman should be," said Mrs. Blunt, giving the knife a turn that made Gerald turn quite pale. "*You* would not see it, but we who are so interested in her all remarked it. I speak frankly of it — you have become so entirely one of us that there is no impropriety in my saying so. And I have long set my heart on the match, and so has her father. Willard is a great favorite in the family."

Off went Gerald for a walk of twenty miles that afternoon, and, after revolving the matter dejectedly in his mind for three days, he was seized by an impulse that took him to the very gate of "The Briars" before he could catch himself. He was more than half inclined to ride away again as he had come, when he thought that he might be expected to account for his visit — his guilty heart making him forget that our motives are not sent in with our cards when we call on our friends.

Tranquil-minded, gentle Miss Egerton was sitting in a bow-window, all sunshine and flowers, fresh from

her bath, and Bible. She saw him ride furiously up to the house and halt, and then dismount slowly, and she went herself to the door to welcome him.

"Good-morning, Miss Egerton. I'm disturbing you, I fear," said Gerald, with his ready blush, feeling as though he were a bill-poster with "Claudia" written in letters six inches long for all who ran to read.

"Not in the least," protested Miss Egerton. "I am very glad to see you. Come in."

"But you were reading," said Gerald. "I saw you with your book."

"I had finished," said Miss Egerton. "Claudia read me the Lessons for the day before she went, and I was just looking at some favorite passages in the Psalms. The day is beautiful, is it not? I like these gray days myself — old-woman days I call them, neither very bright nor very dark. I hope you have been well, and that there is nothing amiss with my cousins?"

"Nothing whatever," replied Gerald hastily. "I thought — it occurred to me that Miss Hyde might like to know that Mr. Hyde is going on well. You see her father has been a good deal shattered by the loss of his arm, and keeps his room a good deal. Is she — is she in?"

"She will be soon, I have no doubt. You must stay and dine. She has gone to Wyvvern with Brother Miles, but it is not their intention to linger there. When you are tired of talking to me there are books in plenty with which you can while away your time."

"But I shall not be tired! It is you who are very good to be willing to waste your time on an idle fellow like me," replied Gerald.

Nor was he; and after a long talk in which they

were mutually interested, during which his heart quite warmed to the dear old woman, she left him to his devices, saying:—

“I should like to do honor to my guest by giving a few orders.”

He was too restless to read; he got up and made the rounds of the room, his hands stuffed in his pockets. Might not Claudia come at any moment? He kept an eye on the gate all the while as he examined the Egerton books, and pictures, and knickknacks. He glanced down the road every other moment, expecting to see a trim figure and one not so graceful. But he was doomed to disappointment.

Miss Egerton came back, and, on his saying that he “hoped she was not putting herself out,” declared that she had not made either herself or him uncomfortable by any decided alteration in the day’s dinner, and got her knitting and sat down as quietly as if there was no question of Claudia’s marrying Willard Guest at all. Dinner came, and Gerald had scarcely the appetite of a canary, but started and flushed over every sound in the hall. Afternoon came, and Miss Egerton wondered and wondered “what had become of Brother Miles and Claudia,” and concluded at last that “they must be dining with Amanda George Blunt.”

“Amanda *George*?” asked Gerald.

“Yes. You see, Tom and George and Alfred all have Amandas,” explained Miss Egerton. “That must be it—I am so sorry.”

Evening came—sunset, at least, but no Claudia; and Gerald, ashamed to stay another moment, reluctantly took himself off, leaving a formal message for Claudia, and thanking Miss Egerton for a pleasant day.

“Not very pleasant, I fear, for *you*. After all your gaieties, too,” said Miss Egerton. “I have really enjoyed it. I don’t often have a young man like you

all to myself for a day. It has made me feel quite like a ghost. 'The Briars' used to be filled with young company when I was a girl. And now Brother Miles and I are always here alone — oftener than not he is out, and I am left quite to myself. But I do not complain. I have the Friend of Friends with me. I am not lonely."

Her gentle words struck chill somehow upon Gerald's fevered heart. He held her hand and looked down at her placid old face.

"That sounds strange to me," he said.

"No doubt. I am an old woman, you see, and you a young man. It is a great satisfaction to me to have Claudia with me. I shall miss her sorely when she marries. She makes the house so bright. You are — friends, are you not?" said Miss Egerton, with a mild upward glance.

"Do you, too, think that she is going to marry Mr. Guest?" asked Gerald quickly.

Miss Egerton understood, and was troubled. She had not always been an old woman, and she thought Gerald almost as lovable and attractive as a memory — a shadow-lover that had passed across the threshold of the door in which they were standing fifty years before, never to return.

"I have heard as much," she said, and Gerald dropped her hand. "But I think — I hope — it is not true," she added. "I know she likes him; but liking is not love. Good-bye. God bless you."

Gerald took her hand again and wrung it, and then bolted out of the house without a word, and rode home as fast as he had come.

He was sitting alone in the dining-room a few days after this, fathoms deep in love and dejection, doggedly working at a scythe on which he was putting a new handle, when the door suddenly opened, and a

voice said, "Is anybody at home?" It was Claudia, cheerful as daylight, and as welcome as the sun after his night of gloomy fancies. The real Gerald leaped to meet her in a flash of joy from his blue eyes before the actual one got there bodily, though he lost no time about it. He relieved her of various packages.

"I can only give you a hand to shake, hyacinth and all," she said, and Gerald performed that feat without injuring the pot of flowers in question. "It is for auntie. Does n't it look like spring? It *is* spring, for I saw a bluebird flash by my window as I was dressing this morning. Oh! how nice it is to get back! I could n't stay away another *minute*!"

"What's in this basket? Hello! another pigeon?" said Gerald, taking it from her.

"Yes; a valuable homing one—Cousin Miles gave it to me for Wyn, who is turning himself into a sporting character rapidly, and has already won a prize. This bundle is celery for father's dinner, and must go in fresh water at once, and that's tobacco for Uncle Beverly. Where's father? I feel as though I had been gone a month. Is n't it absurd? How's Keith?" said Claudia, when he had helped her off with her wrap. She seated herself, and then jumped up again: "Oh! I forgot, cousin sent you one of her plum-puddings—that's it in the green box. She thought, as an Englishman, you would appreciate it, and I encouraged the idea for obvious reasons. What have you been doing to her? She has quite lost her heart to you. Has anything happened since I left? I feel as though all sorts of important events had occurred in my absence—I always do if I go away for three days."

"Keith fell in the rain-barrel yesterday, and got a fright and a wetting. Your father got his glasses from Baltimore; and Charley and Wyn and I have

had a grand 'possum hunt. I think that is all!" said Gerald, smiling.

"He *did*! Oh! my poor little man. He might have been drowned! I've warned him against it a thousand times," said Claudia, reseating herself and unpinning her veil.

"Which fully accounts for what happened. The thing we may not, must not, should not do grown irresistible, I suppose. I thought you only meant to be gone a few days. I quite thought you had eloped with one of your numerous cousins—Guest, for instance," said Gerald.

"No, not I," replied Claudia, coloring, and said no more except, "Are you all right, and have you been looked after properly in my absence?"

Her tone changed as she made the personal inquiry.

"No; I have been all wrong, Miss Hyde, as wrong as possible; the tide ran quite out and left a shipwrecked Briton stranded on the beach, with never a puff of wind and not a sail in sight."

"Is that all? Then, be comforted. It will run in again."

"I am not so sure of that," said Gerald. "But I have the grace to be thoroughly ashamed of myself. Pray pardon my egotism. I would rather face a jungle full of Royal Bengal tigers than one blue-devil any day, and sometimes they come at me in battalions."

"It is natural enough—off here, among people who haven't a drop of your blood in their veins, so far from home," said Claudia, with all a Virginian's feeling about separation from home and kindred.

"Oh! it's not *that*. In fact, I never knew what it was to feel at home until I came to the 'Bower,'" said Gerald; and hastened to add, "You see I've been roving about all my life. You must not think that I am unhappy here. You have all been so good to me,

I can never forget it. I was an infinitely lonely man and a mortally weary one when I came here. I had lived in tents for years like so many other social Arabs; I had built myself a card-house, meaning to live in it, and that had tumbled about my ears; I had lost my place in my uncle's home and heart, and was a most forlorn, homeless creature when you took me in. I have made great friends with your father. I am very fond of the kids. And I am a respectful admirer of Mrs. Blunt. She is by all odds the cleverest old woman I have ever known. Altogether I am happier and more contented now than I have ever been in my life. I suppose I must just be a grumbling, ill-tempered fellow."

"Well, grumble as much as you please. But ill-tempered you certainly are not. I must go and find father," said Claudia, with such a bright look that all the clouds of the past ten days took on a tinge of rose. But they did not retain that tint, unfortunately, in the months that followed, during which Gerald waxed more and more melancholy.

Every day as it passed incorporated Claudia into the body and substance of his life more deeply.

Every day he found in her some fresh sparkle of humor, some fresh fragrance of unselfishness, some sweet sunbeam of feeling, some new proof that she possessed tact, sympathy, intuition, comprehension, and every other gift and faculty that makes a woman adorable and companionable, lovely and beloved.

To read any book with her was to get its full flavor, and enjoy it fourfold; to discuss it with her was to get an independent and interesting view of it. He could not tell which was the greater luxury, to talk to her, or hear her talk. Merely to sit in the same room with her was pleasanter than any other companionship he had ever known, except that he had always some

difficulty in choosing the spot—to sit over by the window had become exile to Siberia!

“And there is that in her that hedges her about more effectually than a dozen Spanish duennas, or all Queen Elizabeth’s ruffs, and hoops, and temper, and power; or a Swiss Garde-du-Corps,” he thought, sometimes, when he drew nearer. “Even if I did not love her far too well to dim by so much as a breath the mirror that reflects such a lovely image, if I could, the man does not live who is not obliged to look to his words and ways with Miss Hyde. With all her soft brightness and gentleness, she is one of the women who ‘looks a man’s hat off,’ as Thackeray said of a grande dame’s portrait. She keeps me on my knees, I know, though I see her every day and all day long openly, intimately. I have never seen her in an expensive dress. I have never seen her by moonlight, or gas-light, or rose-light, or lime-light, or any other light calculated to enhance a woman’s beauty and attractiveness; but I have never thought any woman half so lovely. All her life lies open before me, without possibility of illusion or delusion, or mistake, and I reverence her with all my heart and soul, have no greater honor than to be her friend, and would ask no greater joy than to win her love. But I must stand by and make no attempt to do so.”

Many happy months followed, in which Gerald was very miserably happy—the pleasure of being with Claudia was intense, in spite of everything; the pain of his position often seemed to him more than he could bear. He did his work faithfully and efficiently, but the season was unfavorable, and the return for all his labor seemed to him wretchedly inadequate. In his anxiety to get on and prosper, he took upon himself certain duties at Wardour’s farm during the slack season, and when that gentleman got back from England



he proved an anything but agreeable employer. He ordered Gerald around in a style that showed a bourgeois soul off to perfection, but tried his aristocratic employee most fearfully. He found a great deal of fault, and was not too careful about the terms in which he did it. He was perfectly just, and did not mean to be unkind in his dealings with Gerald, but all the same fretted him to extremity. And Gerald, the high-spirited, not to say haughty, would wince, would flush, would sometimes retort, but in the main submitted to the yoke, and ruled his spirit, and held his tongue. For he had a hope—a very faint hope—based on one or two of the slightest things: a vivid blush, a few ordinary courtesies done with extraordinary sweetness, a look, earnest and searching, now often directed to him, as if Claudia were trying to pierce through the veil of the senses and outward circumstance, and find out what manner of man the real Gerald beneath was. He became profoundly conscious of a great many things as he met it—the spectres of long dead and wholly unrepented-of and forgotten sins rose from their graves, accusingly; sweet childish memories, his faults and failures and shortcomings, and all the stains and blots upon this, the best and purest experience of his life. In the clear radiance of this new light only his darkness became visible, and all his past seemed inexpressibly poor, mean, and barren.

Discontented with himself, galled by his poverty and its effects, with his heart cramped as in a vise, and his body wearied by very hard and often utterly uncongenial work, his mind monotonously bounded on every side by the same hard, unyielding conditions, and his spirit subjected to such restraints and humiliations as it had never imagined, poor Gerald plodded on and on for eighteen months.

He was sometimes morbid, sometimes a little bitter, but all the while he was gaining in strength, in patience, in true manliness. He lost something of social grace, but every day better wore and better deserved "the royal name of gentleman." And for all his bondage he was free, as he had never been. For all his sorrow, he knew a joy compared with which all other joys had become comparatively insipid and valueless.

The chances and changes, the wear and tear, the daily duties, drudgeries, exactions, and exigencies of all that time, together with its simple pleasures and occasional relaxations, had shown him Claudia under a thousand aspects, but always —

"A perfect woman, nobly planned  
To warn, to comfort, and command."

The time did not seem long to him, "for the love he bore her;" and as for Claudia, she too felt that it had passed very swiftly, and was filled with sweet content.

She came down one morning in June, toward the close of this period, and found Gerald leaning against a pillar on the south porch, absorbed in reading. Joining him, she looked silently at the open page, and he pointed out the place without a word. Together they read: —

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need by sun and candle-light . . .  
I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of all my life!  
— And, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death."

Gerald shut the book with a little bang when they had finished, after a look at Claudia. He took it in and laid it on the hall table, and came back.

"What do you say to some *roses*?" he asked, with the affectionate confidence of tone that delighted her secret heart. "You look like one yourself this morning, in that pink stuff."

"Lawn, if you please. Price twelve cents a yard in Wyvvern," corrected Claudia.

"I am talking of *flowers*, not of drapers' materials. I decline to accept the amendment," said Gerald.

Claudia gathered up her skirts to save them from the dew, and they ran down the steps and terrace into her garden, gay in its summer splendor, half shine, half shade. Gerald fell to cutting roses at once, while Claudia tied up a fuchsia lying prone on the ground.

"Are n't you afraid of being cut off yourself in your prime?" asked Gerald, flourishing the garden scissors at her as he snipped off a lovely Lamarque at her very elbow.

"Not in the least," she replied.

"Ah, that is because you are a divinity as well as a rose, and naturally you have nothing to fear like others, mere mortals. I must tell you that I suspected it from the first moment that I saw you, but I could n't be sure until I had lived under the same roof with you for a year and a day. It takes that," said Gerald, going on to a bush of damask beauties that were fairly begging to be gathered.

"For a divinity I must say it is shameful curiosity, but is earth, air, or water my native element, I should like to know?" asked Claudia.

"You are a Celtic institution and variety, compounded of all three for you were made of the blossoms of the oak for strength, the broom for grace, and the meadow-sweet for fragrance. Your name is Flower-Aspect, and you were made by Math as a wife for — let me see, I forget his name! I am very sorry, Miss Hyde, to leave you in doubt on such a subject.

I used to think it was Willard, perhaps, but that is not a Welsh name, is it?"

"No," said Claudia, smiling. "I like your divinity, but I am not she."

"Ah! then I have made a mistake, and you are one of Douglas Jerrold's fireside saints — '*Sancta Claudia di familia*.' Now that I think of it, there is a faint aureole above that coil of your hair, and it comes from 'the sacred centre of fire' — which is what the word 'family' means. I have never known a woman so devoted heart and soul to her people."

"Your illusions about me will be dissipated in time, and then I suppose I shall be just a 'cinder-wench,' my coach a pumpkin, and my horses mice."

"I think not; I have known you for nearly two years, and not a particle of the pollen has been shaken from Flower-Aspect yet, not so much as the dust from a butterfly's wing," insisted Gerald ardently. "If I thought I could be mistaken in you — but I shall not, so I'll not go on supposing anything so painful."

Claudia had been smiling, not ill pleased to hear herself so prettily praised and so sincerely, but she became grave as she said, "I hope never to disappoint any just expectation of yours. But you must not think too highly of me. Be content to see in me a faulty but true friend."

"Will my friend have some roses?" said Gerald, holding out a handful. "What are you doing? Do for once keep the prettiest for yourself!"

"I was only thinking of giving father some," replied Claudia, coloring guiltily.

"Oh! of course, as you please," said Gerald stiffly.

"Then I please to keep them all and tuck them in my belt, and gather something else for father."

"Do you remember giving me a rose the first even-

ing we walked here together?—you were showing me the garden. I have it now,” said Gerald.

“You are entitled to dozens of them, I’m sure, you’ve been so kind about taking care of it. Thanks to your weeding and spading and watering, it is in beautiful order, and a perfect delight to me; and even Mr. Wardour’s feelings so far got the better of him that he confessed it to be ‘not bad,’ the other day,” replied Claudia.

“Do you remember giving it to me?” asked Gerald, exactly as though he had not heard her.

“Yes,” said Claudia; and Gerald thought there had never been a sweeter “yes” enunciated.

Together they walked on down to the brow of the hill, and stood there in the fragrant silence, which was not solitude, admiring the fertile valley far, far below, the cloud-effects, the mountains. Suddenly, without a word, Gerald turned and held out his hand, and she put hers in it.

“Miss Claudia! Miss Claudia! Breakfast’s done come in, and dee bell’s done ring *twicet*,” shrieked Pontius from the foot of the terrace, at this moment of all moments, and Claudia took her hand away again very hastily and shamefacedly.

Gerald, too, said, in quite an altered tone, as they walked back to the house:—

“I meant to consult you about a certain matter. I’ve a letter here from my aunt. And I can’t think what can have put it in her head, but she and Charles are coming out to see me. They will be here in a week, and of course I must find lodgings for them in Wyvvern. Do you know of any?”

“Are they, really! But why lodgings? Why should they not come here? Would they be contented, do you think? We should be delighted to have them,” replied Claudia, greatly surprised and interested.

"Would you really have them?"

"Why, of course! How could you dream of anything else? Unless—" Claudia stopped.

"But it would be giving trouble."

"It is *never* a trouble to have friends with us as long as we have a roof over our heads and mammy in the kitchen. And even if she were to fall sick we can manage. They must come to us, by all means, if you think we can make them comfortable."

"If you could put Charles in the cellar on a diet of potato parings and skim milk, he will be perfectly happy, I can promise you, and my aunt is the least exacting of women, and I think will be heartily grateful for your goodness," said Gerald, "as I am."

"Very well; then, that is settled, and we'll put a welcome on the hob for them at once!" concluded Claudia cheerfully.

## CHAPTER XIX.

D. PEDRO : Runs not this speech like iron through your blood ?

CLAUD : I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

*Much Ado about Nothing.*

CLAUDIA, determined to do all she could for Gerald's kindred, because they were his, contrived to give another screw to the vise which always pinched her, and got some gay, flowered chintz, and made fresh curtains to the windows of the guest-room and the tester of the solemn old bed.

"I've had a telegram. They have arrived safely," said Gerald, looking in, and catching her in the act. "What pretty stuff! How good of you to take the trouble! Your father has telegraphed them, and they'll be down to-morrow."

"How nice! I am so glad for you. I wish it was to-day," replied Claudia cheerfully; "and I do hope they will make us a nice long visit. If you like to make a long arm and put up these curtain poles, you may. Cousin Miles did that one, but it makes me nervous to see him mounted on that little table. He would n't let me do it."

"And quite right, too," said Gerald, doing as she suggested. "Do remember that you are not to let the Thirwells add to your cares, Miss Hyde. If you do, I shall wish them further."

"Oh, no; only to my pleasures," protested Claudia. "You must keep them as long as you can."

"Hem! I don't know about that. We are very well as we are, are n't we?" replied Gerald.

"Very. But well may be better, may it not?"

"Yes, and best — but — we will see. It may be not so well. One can never tell — for me, that is. Have I got the puckers in place properly?"

"Yes; but there seems one on your mind that I can't understand," replied Claudia. "Explain yourself."

But Gerald only shook his head, and Cousin Miles coming in, it was Claudia who explained that they were talking of the Thirwells.

On the morrow they came, and all the Hydes, as usual, assembled on the porch to meet them. First descended from the carriage a very grand person, whom Claudia at first mistook for Mrs. Thirwell. But this person was soon helping out another person, whom Gerald addressed as "Aunt." This done, she stood aside for a moment, and then, with her arms full of cloaks and bags, suddenly made the greatest possible sensation by the simplest thing in the world. A stray pickaninny, who had run around from the kitchen, was standing near the steps all agog, and the young person stooped and kissed the child, saying, "Oh! you little deah!" It was Pigott, Mrs. Thirwell's maid. And if a loaded cannon had suddenly exploded, the effect on the party on the porch could not have been more pronounced.

A hat might almost have been hung on Uncle Beverly's protruding eyes; his expression was a thing too delicious for words, as with a three-volume grunt he turned back into the house.

The boys giggled outright, and Gerald, half amused, half annoyed, advanced and presented his relatives.

"She has brought her *maid*," he whispered in distress to Claudia, the first moment possible.

"Well, what of it? It does n't matter," replied Claudia, who had no fear whatever of servants' eyes or tongues or tales, or of "the nuisance" of them,



like all Southerners, and never felt anything a trouble that she could do for a guest.

Mr. Thirwell was at once, of course, ushered to his room by Mr. Hyde and Uncle Beverly (very glum, but doing his duty as a member of the family), Mrs. Thirwell by Claudia and mammy. When they were safely shut in, the retreating currents met in the hall.

"Whar was dat 'ooman raised? *Dey'se* quality. What dey doin' wid a 'ooman dat don' know no better 'n dat?" said Uncle Beverly to Claudia confidentially.

"In England, Uncle Beverly," explained Claudia, "there are no colored people," and would have said more, but was interrupted by Pigott, who now came out *en route* to the kitchen to heat her curling-tongs. As it happened, she encountered Pontius on the stairs coming up with hot water, after passing Claudia with a mincing modesty of mien that she meant to be very captivating.

"You go long! Don't you come here. Yer ain't gwine kiss *me*!" exclaimed that irrepressible member of society, with a mocking grin.

"Whatever are you talkin' of? Kiss you, indeed! I don't 'alf like your talkin' like that," retorted Pigott, scandalized, as she proceeded on her way.

In a little while the guests were set down to a simple meal. "With every wish to do honor to Gerald's kindred, it is all that can be done," Claudia had thought of it. But it was all very nice, and offered without the least embarrassment or apology. A Virginian would set the Prince of Wales himself down placidly to such a one without the least concern. He gives all that he has with all his heart, and that done would expect a prince to be a gentleman, and think no more about it.

There was a great deal of pleasant talk at table.

Mrs. Thirwell, in her chattering way, hopped from twig to twig conversationally; told them of her passage, of her few "impressions of America," talked to Gerald of his friends in England.

"Do you know, dear, you've got quite the American tone and accent," she remarked, among other things. "And you're so very brown; I really scarcely knew you. I brought you some things from your tailor. He asked me what had become of you, and said he had had no orders for so long he quite thought you must have forsaken him."

"He may congratulate himself that I have, for he would certainly never get his money," observed Gerald.

"I took it upon myself to order some things. I hope you'll like them, dear. There is a corduroy suit that I thought would be just the thing for the bush," said Mrs. Thirwell sweetly.

"Perhaps it would if I were in the bush, aunt. Thanks all the same," replied Gerald, much embarrassed.

"I met your friend, Mr. Cartwright, just before we sailed, and he asked where you were, and I told him you were in America, and he said that was all right, and that he would see you, for he was just off for Rio Janeiro himself. What a *very* nice man he is."

"I don't happen to be on that continent, aunt, but, if he should stray over to this one and find the needle in the haystack, I should be glad to see him," said Gerald, more embarrassed still.

"Oh! no. Of course. He wouldn't be!" said Mrs. Thirwell, hastily correcting herself. "But it is not an uncommon impression at all. Monsieur Lefroi, who was with you in Paris, was in our hotel at Scarborough, too, and made most particular inquiries about you, and said he hoped you had met his cousin at — 'Tuscaloosa' was the name of the place, I *think*. I

asked him where it was, and he said: 'Oh! quelque part dans les Indes!' These foreign countries are very difficult to get *quite* right, aren't they?" said Mrs. Thirwell, courteously including Claudia in her remarks. "Oh! but I forgot that *you* would not think so."

"Geography is like astronomy — too great a subject for any of us to more than master a few broad particulars and some details. I often think of the millions of people living in thousands of places that I know nothing about — with regret, too — some of the places must be so pretty, and some of the people so interesting," said Claudia, with a quick glance at Gerald's pink face.

In spite of this not too propitious beginning, the Thirwells, in twenty-four hours, were entirely domesticated. Mrs. Thirwell prattled and purled all that afternoon — the pleasant little feminine everythings and nothings that made up her conversation made agreeable by her smile, her evident kindness of heart and air of content.

Once more she got into the breakers. Charles asked something about the effect of the war on "the laboring class in the Southern States," and both Gerald and Mr. Hyde took the floor in reply.

"But *surely* you've had quite time enough to recover from the war of the Colonies," said Mrs. Thirwell, shifting her knitting-needles, and giving a pat to Keith's head as she did so.

"We are talking of the last war, aunt —" began Gerald.

"The great Civil War of '61, mother," added Charles.

"Ah! Yes, yes! I remember to have heard something of it at the time, though I was in a very secluded part of Germany," said Mrs. Thirwell.

"Remember to have heard something of it at the time," repeated Cousin Helen to herself, aghast, as we

all are when what we have looked at only through the big end of the telescope is suddenly presented to us through the small. That was what all that bloodshed and ruin and misery and desolation, and all the subsequent slow martyrdom had meant in some lives! It was inconceivable.

Mrs. Thirwell left her son to discuss these questions, and carried Gerald off to her room for a private talk. She was delighted to have him all to herself again, and very affectionate. She unpacked his box and her budget, and he enjoyed both as much as she could have wished.

“Oh! if you only knew the pleasure it gave me to choose the cloths, and consult with Briggs about cuts and styles and linings, and all that! You know what Charles is! He scarcely knows one coat from another. He puts on the first thing that comes to hand. I do believe he would forget to put on his hat half the time if he were not reminded; and as to getting him to go with me for a nice day of shopping for himself, he would do *anything* first. It almost makes me cry, though he does n’t know it, when I buy him beautiful shirts, to have him give half of them away to a navvy — all got up to perfection, too, — and go away for a mission, and come back in a shilling thing that I have to turn over privately to the charwoman. Charles is *dreadful*, and gets worse and worse! Think of his giving away his rug and steamer chair to a *steerage passenger* as we came over, and going without. I thought it very odd that he stopped below so much, and I found out quite accidentally from the stewardess what he had done, and that he was holding services every day in that stuffy, horrible hole with them, instead of being up on deck with us. We had some such charming people on board, too! To be sure, the woman had a sick child; but would anybody but Charles do such a

thing?" complained Mrs. Thirwell, all her comfortable mother-face in a pucker.

"It is a pity there are not more people like him, aunt. But I do think they ought to be taken from orphan asylums, and never marry," replied Gerald smiling.

"We shall be paupers yet, I tell him, and come to the workhouse. You would n't *believe* the money he gives away. And now that he has got this idea of elevating the blacks, I daresay I shall be cut down to lodgings and two dresses a year, and that he'll leave himself without a postage stamp. Don't misunderstand, dear. Of course, I *want* the blacks to be elevated. The dear archdeacon had it very much at heart, and I love everything in which he was interested, and am anxious to further Charles's work —"

"But not at your expense? A good many people feel that way about it," said Gerald.

"There *is* a limit, dear. If I could only make Charles see it, and be more like other people. I can't say that I could see any necessity for his coming out here at all, myself, when he was doing so much good at home, except for seeing you, dear. He had a *most* interesting man, a splendid violinist, and a reformed thief, and a blind forger, only one-and-twenty, and a lot of other quite *desperate* characters, but nothing would do him but to leave them and give up all his English comforts, and come to America. I'm sure I don't see what is to be the end of it," said Mrs. Thirwell, with a sigh.

Their talk then turned on Gerald's surroundings and prospects, and concluded by his telling his aunt what valued friends of his the Hydes had become.

"It is so good of them to have us here, and I think them quite charming, really. It is most pathetic to see Mr. Hyde's empty sleeve, and Miss Hyde seems such a devoted daughter," his aunt replied, after which

Gerald went off to his room and got into a new suit with much satisfaction, for Cupid's arrows are generally tipped with fine feathers, and he had suffered some grievous pangs of chagrin at being obliged to appear so shabby in the eyes of Dulcinea the peerless. He little dreamed that her heart had only grown more tender to him in consequence, and that the sight of the well-worn and scrupulously brushed old diagonal coat, into which he got as regularly as evening came, had more than once brought the tears to her eyes.

He met Claudia on the landing in her one evening gown, and they both started back in affected awe of such splendors. He did not seem quite the Gerald she had known, in his fashionable attire, for at least five minutes, and she had a sudden sense of isolation, a feeling that her gown, and her home, and everything in it must seem very shabby to these fine London folk — a feeling which would have been confirmed if she could have heard Pigott's remarks on the other side of the wall, as she did her mistress's hair.

"Wherever 'ave Mr. Charles brought us, mem? It's such a queer place, this, if I may make bold to say so. Not but what I can see they are gentlefolks in a small way."

"Pigott, you are presuming; and I am surprised at you," was Mrs. Thirwell's rebuke, nevertheless highly entertained by that young person's account of people and customs and manners in this strange land.

"Mr. Charles created a stir, mem, in church to-day, I can tell you. Some of 'em stood up to look at 'im, and I 'eard 'em saying they'd never seen a clergyman with an 'ood on before. And they all dressed off, and wearing flowers, and using fans just like a theatre, mem;" — was one. "This 'ave been a fine old place certainly in its day. It was the dark servants struck me. They're that queer there's no makin' 'em out at

all 'alf the time, beggin' your pardon," said that artful Abigail, tacking at once and changing her course when she found that her mistress would not listen to impertinent gossip.

Meanwhile Pigott herself was being subjected to similar criticism downstairs from another point of view.

"Dat's a *queer* 'ooman; anybody dat wants po' whites kin take 'em and go 'long for me," said Uncle Beverly to mammy.

"She's mighty shiny and pernickity, and she call me 'Mrs. Hyde'—but she certainly do fix up hair mighty pretty," replied mammy, willing to give even "po' whites" their due.

If Gerald had wished his relatives to like the Hydes in general, as he had, he ought certainly to have been gratified by the very friendly relations established between them immediately, and by the way in which Mrs. Thirwell took to the cousins (who spontaneously and most kindly entertained her), to all the connections, friends, and neighborhood, as well as by Mr. Thirwell's marked satisfaction with the family, place, and people, and the rector of the parish.

He saw, too, that the Hydes liked them. Claudia frankly expressed herself attracted by his aunt and charmed by his cousin.

If Gerald had wished his kindred to admire Claudia in particular, and he certainly had desired it, he had every reason to be satisfied. Charles, who had never been known to have a woman friend, was openly and transparently fascinated by her. He said as much to Gerald a month later.

"She is beautiful," he said warmly; "beautiful with the peculiar refinement that a religious nature, a cultivated mind, a pure heart and life give. Why have you so rarely mentioned her in writing home? I have greatly enjoyed my talks with her and with Mr. Hyde,

and I hope to get many valuable hints from them as to the practical working of my plans."

"She is a noble girl," agreed Gerald.

"The father is a dear old man and a very high-bred one, with the chivalrous sentiments and courteous manners we formerly associated with men of his class in England — men with the inherited instincts and long ancestral traditions, as well as the names and estates, of gentlemen. And Mrs. Blunt is an ideal old gentlewoman, such as were plentiful enough in the Georgian and early Victorian periods."

"To which they practically belong," interpolated Gerald.

"And what a contrast they make to some of our aristocrats of to-day — our 'smart set' — our men with Norman names and the manners of stable-boys and the morals of adventurers; puffing smoke into their wives' faces in their own houses, and making love to their hostess, in their 'friends'; gamblers, drunkards, not even *men*, much less gentlemen. And our 'ladies' of high rank, turning tradeswomen, painted, half dressed, dining at men's clubs, smoking, betting, arranging in the public prints with other 'ladies' wishing 'for introductions to good society'; flocking to the divorce courts, or figuring there, greedy of publicity at any cost to self-respect, and of excitement at any hazard, cheapening and lowering themselves and the whole tone of society as only women can. Portentous and shameful signs, these, of the downfall of the whole system. In my opinion nothing can save it," said Mr. Thirwell, his face as stern as that of a Hebrew prophet.

"Women are certainly the conservation of all that is good in the world. I think myself they are pulling down the house," said Gerald.

"As Samson did, only by weakness, frivolity, and vice, rank materialism, mammon-worship, not by



strength, and they will be buried beneath the ruins. One modest, tender, devout woman can do more to purify society than a dozen good men, and one wicked woman can do more to corrupt it than a dozen rascals. There is too much selfishness and calculation and hypocrisy in all our social relations with each other; and hospitable, in any true sense, is getting to be the last thing that can be said of our hospitality. A *quid pro quo*, a burglar's determination 'to get in,' an axe of some sort to grind, an impudent resolve to lead, a vulgar desire to outshine, seem to have taken its place for the most part. If 'society,' rigidly interpreted, at all represented England, we should soon have neither altars nor homes, nor honor nor prosperity as a nation, but I thank God *it does n't*. You look very well, Gerald. Your life out here evidently agrees with you."

"It is an active and useful one, and I like it a thousand times better than my old one. Pleasure is the business of an attaché's life, and a dismal affair it gets to be for most men, after thirty. I have lost all the morbidness and wretchedness that preyed upon me when I left England. I feel as though I had been burrowing underground for an age, and had just got up on the earth and out into the light and air."

"You are content to stay here, then?"

"Perfectly. I have no intention, no wish to go elsewhere."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Mr. Thirwell, the softness coming into his face that so changed its usual rugged severity. "And your fortune is not yet made?"

"No; nor likely to be, so far as I can see!" replied Gerald.

Mr. Thirwell was silent, wondering what influence had been at work in his cousin's life.

"He is more changed than any man I ever saw," he thought. "His look, his bearing, but above all his

expression, is totally changed, and for the better. He is twice the man that he was when he left England. He has either become a Christian and so gained in manliness, or he is very deeply in love, which is the same thing in another form, for 'love is of God.' A man does not cheerfully accept poverty and hard work and exile from the country in which he was born and the people among whom he has been bred, unless there is some powerful underlying motive to sustain, or reward, to cheer him."

"Are you telling your cousin of your plans for building a hospital?" asked Claudia, joining them.

"No. But I shall. I look to you for a great deal of help," said Mr. Thirwell. "Don't forget that."

"And I will gladly do what I can, and so will father. The only time I ever knew him to break down outright in all our reverses was when one of our old servants came to him in dreadful need, and he could n't help him. You see, they were the eighth generation born in our family, and he had always provided for all their needs, and felt that he was their protector still. It was old John's Betty, and she stood there rubbing her hands and saying, 'You kyan' do *nothin'* for me, Mars' Addison?' as if she could n't believe her ears. And then father cried, and I cried, and we had a scene generally," said Claudia. "Poor father!"

"As a poor-law system I had no idea that plantations were so well organized until I talked to Miss Hyde," said Mr. Thirwell. "I am investigating the whole subject. Should you mind if I got up a class of black boys from the neighborhood and gave them instruction?" he asked of Claudia. "And would you object to my including Pontius among them?"

"Not at all," said Claudia. "I have taught him intermittently myself, and would have been glad to do so regularly, but you know we have no control over them now, and I could n't get him to come to me."

"You don't know what you are undertaking, Charles," said Gerald. "You have n't the least idea."

"But you are quite right to undertake it," said Claudia quickly.

"I know that," said Mr. Thirwell.

It seemed to Gerald after this that his cousin and Claudia were never done talking to each other. They seemed to have as much in 'common as the early Christians, and were, indeed, united by precisely the same bond. But Gerald, not understanding this, waxed very jealous, and again made himself unhappy, for he soon clearly perceived, though Claudia did not, that his cousin was falling in love.

"He is just the sort of man that she would admire. I have often thought so. And Charles can marry any day he likes. My aunt would be glad of any sort of anchor for him, and, I can see, likes the idea. And they would work together at soup-kitchens, and in schools, and slums, and be perfectly happy, I suppose. He is a thousand times better suited to her, and more worthy of her than I," he thought.

Mr. Thirwell organized his class; but as Pontius's professional duties interfered — so he declared — with his attendance, Mr. Thirwell shut himself up with Pontius in his room, and gave him the most conscientious care. He took every Sunday some of the commandments, and endeavored with fair success to transfer it to that volatile brain, as well as to make some impression upon the boy's heart.

But somehow after every such lesson, Mr. Thirwell, strange to say, found that some personal possession was missing — a collar-button, a pair of studs, a pair of boots, a box, an inkstand. He was a man of simple tastes and careless habits, however, and he did not at first associate these losses with his prize pupil. Going up to his room one afternoon, though, he came upon a novel and im-

pressive sight in Pontius seated before the looking-glass, his face profusely lathered and partially shaved, with implements not unfamiliar, and in his hand Mr. Thirwell's handsome ebony and silver brush (a present from his mother), with which he was skillfully operating on his back-hair! Mr. Thirwell stared, as well he might. But before he could interfere, who should march in through the open door but Uncle Beverly. He had come with a message which was never delivered. For that experienced functionary caught sight of a figure, the reflection of a face whose every grin and grimace he knew, reflected in the mirror.

With a swoop, he fell upon Pontius, crying, "Wha' you doin' heah, disgracin' our family! Come wid *me!* *I'll* teach you to bresh your har! I'll shave yer!" He inserted his fingers in the collar of Pontius's jacket, he jerked him out of the chair, he flung him out of the room, in a series of elliptical whirls.

"Don't be too severe with him," said Mr. Thirwell, pursuing them out on the landing.

"I'se doin' dis! I'se gwine settle wid dis black nigger," cried Uncle Beverly, with more whirls and flings and abuse, and finally disappeared with his captive, leaving Mr. Thirwell more amazed than ever.

Great was the disgust and the mortification in the kitchen when Pontius's enormity became known. Mammy fell upon him tooth and nail with the broom on hearing of it, and feeling ran so high that the matter came to Claudia's ears.

Uncle Beverly at once put Mr. Thirwell's brush into boiling water and ammonia, saying: —

"Don' lemme see no more breshes in your wool de longes' day *you* live. Do yer hear?" threateningly to the now subdued Pontius. He carefully took the brush back when it was dry to Mr. Thirwell, still in his room, with humble and ample apology. "Dat

Ponchus is a limb, sir. He's allus in mischief, and full er fool tricks. But he ain't never disgraced our family before. He ain't nothin' but a nigger nohow. But I done wallop him, and he ain't gwine tech nothin' in here agin." He held out the brush as he spoke. "Dar ain't no har nor hide er Ponchus lef, sir. I done washed it in bilin' water and demonia."

There was no better Christian in Virginia, no better man anywhere than Mr. Thirwell, but he had his limitations like the rest of us.

He looked at the brush, he looked at Uncle Beverly.

"Won't you keep it?" he said; "I have some others. Pray do," and Uncle Beverly bowed himself out with respectful thanks. Five minutes later mammy came in to him, her apron full of the missing effects, all voluble apology.

"It is too bad — poor lad! He had just got the eighth commandment by heart," thought Mr. Thirwell, as he looked at them after she had gone.

But nothing and nobody could long subdue Pontius. Not three days later, Mrs. Thirwell, comfortably established on the back porch with her work, suddenly heard a terrifying "whoop-ee-ee!" and saw spring up at her very elbow a group of Indians such as she had been brought up to associate with the very idea of America — red paint, feathers, blankets and tomahawks, dancing and all; and not stopping to reason about it, the good lady gave a shriek and fled into the house.

Of course it was "Ponchus," the evil genius of the boys, with all of whom he was amusing himself, down to little Keith, the smallest and reddest Indian of the lot, and the meekest that ever flourished a tack-hammer.

"I *knew*, dear, that there were no Indians left in this part, for Charles assured me of it before we came. But that nasty little fellow has given me *such* a turn. Do ask Pigott to fetch me some sal volatile. All my life

I've read of Indians springing out like that, and I hadn't time to think. Who *could* have thought of their getting themselves up like that?" said Mrs. Thirwell to Gerald and Claudia, whom she met in the hall.

Their visit at the "Bower" ended, the Thirwells established themselves in Wyvvern. But Mr. Thirwell was constantly back and forth for several weeks.

"Are you annoyed with me?" asked Claudia of Gerald one day, hurt by his reserve, and sensitive to the least cloud on the face she loved. And though he assured her he was not, her heart was not at rest, for the cloud was still there.

At last Gerald came home from Wyvvern one evening, and was sitting in the still unlit parlor, as it chanced, when his cousin and Claudia came in.

Before he could make his presence known, he heard something that Mr. Thirwell said, then got up, and hurried forward and accosted them, as if he had not heard, and went away a very miserable man.

But the week following Mr. Thirwell bade Gerald good-bye, and left for "the black belt" of the extreme South, and his mother and Pigott went back to England *via* Niagara and Canada.

Before she left, Mrs. Thirwell slipped a pearl ring on Claudia's finger, saying kindly:—

"So good as you have been to us. I am so sorry for what has happened. I should have been glad if you could have married Charles; but we cannot change these things. And I do not blame you in the least. Your father has all the plans for the hospital which Charles still wishes to put up here, and has charged himself with it. Good-bye, dear Claudia, and don't cry."

## CHAPTER XX.

"O happy love ! — where love like this is found !  
O heartfelt raptures ! — bliss beyond compare !  
I've paced much this weary mortal round,  
And sage experience bids me this declare."

*Burns.*

MR. THIRWELL had been gone a week, and Gerald was in his room, going over for the hundredth time the dingy little account-book in which his small savings were set down. He had even given up smoking, he had spent almost nothing, but there the meagre little store stood, in figures that could not be changed, and he sighed as he closed it and put it back in his pocket.

He was certain in his own mind that Claudia had refused his cousin, his fears had been groundless, his jealousy causeless. His hopes rose with a bound, clouded by the sense he always had of his unworthiness, it is true, but ready enough to soar into the blue, had they not been chained to earth by that melancholy "total" over which he had been poring.

"At this rate, I shall not be able to marry her, even if she — should — for fifty years!" he thought, and stood for fully five minutes on one spot in the carpet, in fixed contemplation of the beautiful impossible.

He then picked up his tools, thinking of a leak that had sprung in the roof the day before, and ran upstairs. He found the trapdoor leading to it open when he got to it, and heard voices, and then stepped out to find Mr. Hyde and Claudia and the boys all there, and pigeons about, around, on every side of them, picking up grain.

"Hello! What does this mean?" he cried, looking, with the tender delight he always felt in her goodness, at Claudia, with a wounded pigeon in one arm, holding fast by Keith with her left hand.

"Is n't it a lovely day? Is n't it nice up here? Our poor pigeons have been almost swept away by yesterday's storm. We found the houses broken loose and most of the nests destroyed; and this poor little fellow, with a broken leg and almost dead, lying in the gutter-pipe. Wyn and I have bandaged it with splints most scientifically, and I have given him some meal with red pepper in it and a few drops of whisky, and he has revived wonderfully. Don't pull away, Keith, dear. Cousin is afraid for you," she said, advancing toward him with her own frank, glad welcome in her face, the child at her side.

"Then I'm just in time. I'll fix the houses back into place," said Gerald, and proceeded to do so, with great energy.

"I have not been up here for twenty years, at least," said Mr. Hyde sadly; "I came up with your mother then."

He stood looking out over the landscape for a moment, and then took a seat on a chimney a little way off, apart with memory.

"The storm *has* made havoc for our featherlings," said Gerald. "They have extensive quarters up here, but surely they don't all squeeze in here?"

"Oh, no! the barn and stables and coach-house are just full of them," cried Charley. "They hatch every month, and while the female is on the eggs, the male scoots off and makes a new nest, and then he takes charge of the family, while she moves into it. You see, their nests are just a pile of twigs, with hay in it, or locust or walnut leaves, that's all."

"This fellow is a splendid cock, Mr. Mildmay. I



expect he'll beat the one thousand miles record. I expect to get the first prize with him — maybe I'll get several. Don't you think I will? See his refined plumage? I've had him registered; see his leg-band? You keep *still*," said Wyn to Gerald and his cock.

"Is n't it funny how they fly straight back to the 'Bower,' no matter where you take them?" said Charley.

"No; I can't say that I can see anything remarkable in *that*," replied Gerald, going on with his work.

"They always sit on the same perch, too. This one we've named Fido. I had a half interest in him, but I sold quarter of it out to Pontius for a water-melon, and quarter to Wyn for cartridges. I wish I had n't now. He'll get a prize, certain, won't he, Claudia?" said Charley. "Give him to me, Wyn. Won't he, Claudia?"

"I hope so, dear. He certainly *looks* as if he might," said Claudia, smiling indulgently.

"I offered to give Edmund a quarter interest in him, but he did n't want it," said Wyn.

"He is such an old sobersides. I don't think he cares for anything except his books, and jumping," said Claudia.

"I can jump a pint and a quart and a gallon every time!" exclaimed Keith, who had been much interested in all this talk, and felt that the time had come for his claims as a sporting man to be recognized.

"Oh! you great gump! *A pint, and a quart, and a gallon!*" repeated the boys, contemptuously, after a roar of laughter.

"He is nothing of the sort. That is just as good a way to measure jumps as any other," said Claudia, putting an arm about the little man. "You shall show us how you do it, darling, when we get down on the

ground. You could n't up here on the roof, you know."

"It is n't a roof. It is an extended and varied plateau. And the view is beautiful. The mountains are really most lovely to-day," said Gerald, turning around to look at them.

"Unusually so, I think," said Claudia, shading her eyes and looking off at them. "It is the dearest valley in the world, and this is the dearest spot in the valley," she said at last.

"*Exactly* in the middle of the sky, Miss Hyde," agreed Gerald, smiling, as he worked.

"Don't you think Wyvvern is the biggest little place in the world, Mr. Mildmay?" inquired Wyn of him.

"I do," said Gerald. "There is no doubt of it; at least *I* have no doubt of it whatever."

"Daughter, can those be the chimneys of the '*Briars*' — there to the right, beyond the river?" called out Mr. Hyde.

"Yes, father."

"I had forgotten they could be seen from here. I am forgetting everything," said Mr. Hyde.

"Not *you*, father," said Claudia.

"You are very unsocial, sir; won't you join us?" asked Gerald, raising his voice.

"I must be going down," said Mr. Hyde, shaking his head, but joining them all the same, presently.

"If I may ask you to wait one moment, sir, I'll take you down," said Gerald.

"I can wait, my boy. It is a waiting world, this — a waiting world," replied Mr. Hyde.

"You are tired, father dear. You ought not to have come up, perhaps, nice as it is to have you, always. You are always flocking by yourself, though, lately, and I don't like it, and can't have it," said Claudia, joining him and slipping her arm in his.

"I have not the temper of a recluse at all, daughter — but I feel myself a spoil-pleasure nowadays — a very dull old man."

"Father! How can you!" began Claudia in shocked tones.

"Now I am at your service," said Gerald, laying down his hammer; and giving Mr. Hyde an arm, he conveyed him with tender respect downstairs, Claudia looking after them.

He came springing back then, and went to work again, saying: —

"I'm sorry we could not persuade him to stop. The day is so fine and it is so nice up here. For my part, I don't see why we should not have tea up here some afternoon. I don't see why another family should not live up here in great comfort and state, several, in fact, as they do on some of the European cathedrals," said Gerald, as the boys scampered off across the plateau, kicking each other's shins as they went, and Claudia sat down to watch operations.

"Are there really such people?" asked Claudia.

"There are, indeed. I myself once had some friends who moved altogether in the upper circles of such an air-colony — Paolo and Teresa Fonseca; Teresa was a washer-woman and got things up in very superior style, and Paolo was an honest, industrious vendor of fruits. I made them a visit once, and found that they lived like most of us in a world of their own, a world of streets in miniature and fashionable or unfashionable localities, of people who had their rigid caste distinctions and a community regularly organized like any other — an aristocracy of poverty instead of wealth. Paolo's house was a pigeon-box of a place; but very neat, and swarming with little beggars, with great lustrous Italian eyes, and elf-locks, so brimful of mischief the marvel was that they had lived a day there. They

told me, though, that very few children ever got hurt, and only twice had they been killed, by falling off the roof, which was only railed in here and there. Teresa's linen was stretched outside on high poles, and she seemed to take the greatest pride in that, and in the fact that her mother had not set foot on the earth for years. You *must* see Italy some day! We must take my favorite walk together from the gate of St. Paul to the Abbey of the Three Fountains. And then there is Bushey Park in June with the chestnuts in bloom! It would be so pleasant to go into the country with you. You must see England, too."

"Would it?" said Claudia softly, meeting his eager asking glance.

"Yes; I associate you with everything that is natural, real, simple," said Gerald, emphasizing each adjective with a blow of his hammer. "I thought the other day how well you matched such surroundings, unlike a certain Mme. Le Maitre with whom I did Fontainebleau for the first time. You should have seen her mincing along under a rose-lined parasol, rouged herself, and dressed in the height of the fashion, affecting to be in love with your humble servant, and all the while one could see the pump at work as plainly as if her hydraulic emotions had been actually pouring out of the spout every time she lifted the handle."

"It is my belief that Madame jilted her companion, and that he is spitefully revenging himself at this late date," said Claudia.

"I don't doubt that I would have been declined with thanks had I aspired so high, for there was an enormously rich Russian paying court to her at the time, but no, — that was simply her idea of a country-walk. She never once looked at a tree, much less a moss. She was a Mahometan hoturi, such as the faith-

ful are to possess in great numbers, made of musk, and such are not to my taste, that's all. I prefer the clover-blossom. Wasn't that field delicious as we came home yesterday? I've read somewhere that Wordsworth never smelled anything in his life except once, and then, by good fortune, it was a beanfield in bloom."

"If Madame failed to please you, no doubt there were plenty of other charming foreigners who avenged her," said Claudia, looking down, and playing with a twig.

"There were. There was a German girl with the bluest eyes you ever saw, and hair like spun gold, and the expression of an angel in earthly difficulties, whom I knew in Bonn, and followed around Germany for two years, and was daft about."

"And yet —" began Claudia.

"And yet — precisely. Those blue, forget-me-not eyes, with lashes half an inch long, never by any chance saw anything but herself, Miss Hyde, and below the golden hair there were exactly two ideas — a passion for finery, and a wild desire to go to court and blossom into a professional beauty. I never saw her excited but once, and that was when an old woman in the same hotel gave her seven yards of fine lace, about which she talked for three weeks, with a rapture, a tenderness, an ideality that I had long despaired of. '*C'est terriblement beau!*' she said of it with religious awe. I was a man, which was another way of saying I was an ass, but that broke the spell, and made a free creature of me again."

"And who succeeded her? For, of course, she had a successor."

"She had. I am evidently not the first man you have known, Miss Hyde, and since you are good enough to be interested I will tell you about her. She was an Irish-woman whom I met in Brussels, full of wit, full of viva-

city ; a girl who was not young, whose nose was too long, and whose mouth was too wide ; a girl with a bad complexion, and not a single beauty, except a perfect figure ; a girl whose people lived in Queer Street, and who had no fortune, and yet who could go into an assemblage of beauties and sink them at every shot, to a court ball and hold her own with the haughtiest, among millionaires and seem a billionaire. She was all that is objectionable and fascinating in women ; a born ogress, brilliant in audacity, of extraordinary pluck, and extremely accomplished. But she came expensive. She absolutely required, to keep her in any sort of health or spirits, a new man, dissolved, like Cleopatra's pearl, in her tea-cup every morning. And I was not a host in myself. I was tired of my German *ingénue*, and fell an easy prey. But not being Venice I could not wed the Adriatic, and I took the train for Paris instead."

"What an odious woman — poisonous !"

"A perfect Upas-tree, with dozens of men sitting under its shade all day long — good men most of them, and honorable — that's the curious feature of it."

"I suppose you mean me to understand how it was that *you* came to be there," said Claudia.

"I should not mind your hearing every word I ever said to her," replied Gerald quickly. "I think I bored her dreadfully by my crass British determination to put a ring on the fourth finger of her left hand, and take her to the country for the remainder of her days. That was before I knew she was an ogress, before I was ousted by Puffendorff of the Austrian Legation, who told me that he would give his soul cheerfully to Mephisto, if he might for twenty-four hours stand in my supposed shoes."

"How shocking ! It is all very sad," said Claudia.

"And mad, and bad. True, but there be such

things in this world of ours, Flower-Aspect," said Gerald gently, dropping down by her, hammer in hand, and changing his tone.

"I hate to think so; but I fear there are," she replied.

"I was bitterly disappointed — impiously rebellious against a power that I called Fate. Well, I've lived to thank God that I escaped the purgatory of granted desires. We would have been in the divorce courts in a year, with all the sanctities of life, all its joys, and hopes, and precious possibilities, dragged out of a profaned home, and piled up in the streets for millions of people to gaze at; for in these days a good deed may not get around the corner, but a scandal girdles the earth. That is, if I had escaped a jail."

"You have reason, indeed, to be grateful to God for preserving you from such great wretchedness. I suppose the wisest of us are but moles in such matters."

"Always children, intent upon running into the fire, and falling downstairs, and angry when restrained — and often madmen. I have learned that. I see many things more clearly than I once did, and I hope I have learned some reverence, and a little humility. Do you remember telling me that I might be the better for the latter when I first came here, the day you read Spenser to me? You've got that little curl at the back of your neck still, I see. How long ago it seems!"

"*Did* I? Could I have been so impertinent? I must have needed it badly myself if I did."

"No. You were quite right. You've been an embodied conscience for me ever since, and taught me more than you know. You've had poor material to work with, but you are the only woman who ever approached me on that plane; and though there is a tradition that men are to be got at most easily on the meanest levels, and by the most unsightly approaches,

such as railroads take to large cities, it is quite a mistake."

He paused for a moment, and Claudia, lifting her eyes, gave him a beautiful look, sun-clear, and nobly earnest.

"How can the way to any human soul be a low or mean one? How can a woman take or make such a way, I wonder. Ah! It is dreadful."

"Shall I go on with my experience of them?" said Gerald, and Claudia bent her head to listen again, feeling personally humiliated and not a little distressed.

"Some years after I parted with Nora Desmond, I met an English girl who seemed to me a modest, lovely creature. Lovely she was, physically, and I loved her for what I thought her gentle, womanly qualities. We became engaged, and were to have been married very soon, but — she jilted me, instead, on hearing of the change in my position consequent upon my uncle's marriage. She laid me aside as if I had been a misfit gown, with no more thought for what I might be feeling or suffering —"

He stopped, unable to go on, and, looking at Claudia, saw a tear rolling down the cheek turned away from him.

"Well, I've forgiven her. But it was the most thoroughly cold-blooded and heartless thing imaginable. I thought I never should, but I have — more, I am grateful to her, grateful to God rather, again, though it cut down to the quick at the time. I was so outraged I thought I had done with women forever. I had no reverence, no respect left for them. I ought to have been more just, but I thought I knew them — that they were all alike, vain, petty, frivolous, worldly, unprincipled. I was a shallow fool measuring the Atlantic with a foot-rule. A better man would have found no lack of good women in the world, and I had



known such, Mellin's wife, and my aunt, and others. Thank you for caring. Your pity is sweet to me. I do not resent it. It sinks very sweetly into my heart, which lost long ago the sting and smart of that wound."

He stopped, but Claudia would not look at him, not wishing him to see her tears. After a while he went on: "I had my ideals, it is true. But I did not know what a woman could be then. I know now, though. I've met one: fine, and true as steel, all that is loveliest, sweetest, and best in women; a loving woman who lives to love and bless all about her, a woman in whom I believe with all my soul, and revere with all my heart. If I were parted from her to-morrow, and never saw her again in this world, I should owe her an unspeakably great debt, and die blessing God for letting me know her." He stopped, and glanced at the half averted figure and face beside him.

At this moment a flaming head, a pair of broad shoulders, appeared above the trapdoor, a veritable sun of beams and twinkles in the way of a face shone upon them, and a loud voice hailed them from afar.

"Ah! Here ye are! How are ye? I met Mr. Hoyde, and he told me I'd foind ye all up here, and to warlk roight up! How are ye, Moildmay?"

On seeing this sight both Claudia and Gerald rose with one impulse.

Claudia turned sharply around and fled, skirting a chimney, making a *détour*, and disappearing precipitately down the stairs up which Mr. Flanders had come. Gerald advanced to meet him.

"Oi've frightened Miss Hoyde away. How is that? The ladies arlways run towards me as a rule! But it does n't matter, for Oi've come over to have a proivate and particular interview with ye — the fact is, this is a *croisis* in me affairs, Moildmay," said that jovial gentleman.

"All right. Sit down, Terence, and tell me all about it while I finish this," said Gerald, picking up his tools again; and he finished his work, and mended the leak, with busy hands, giving kindly heed all the while to the woes and wants of his friend.

The matter ended in his taking Flanders down to his room and giving him a check that materially diminished that most unsatisfactory "total." Flanders, with a delicacy that came from his generous Irish heart, had never borrowed a sixpence from Gerald, because he knew that the latter felt himself under obligations to him. He sincerely protested against doing so now.

"Oi really *can't*, Moildmay, and Oi had no such thart in comin' to ye. I thart we'd tarlk it all over, and it moight be ye could *advaise* me what to do, and where to go, for it's stuck I am in the mud up to the hubs; and I can't go on loike this. Oi'll not take it."

"You *must*, Terence. There! Say no more about it. Pay it back, when you like," insisted Gerald.

When Flanders had gone he entered the amount in his book and sighed again as he looked at it. "It makes no real difference," he thought, but all the same he was unusually depressed all day, and Claudia detected it and set it down to the wrong cause.

"This is very nice," he said, coming in upon them, gathered again about the dining-room table with their work that evening. "I don't envy the travelers."

"I suppose they are in Montgomery, to-night, and I hope they are provided with mosquito nets," said Cousin Helen, looking up from her tatting.

"I hope so, if only for Pigott's sake," replied Gerald. "Perhaps you observed that she had no embraces to bestow on her colored friends when she left. Her philanthropic passion for the race was at the vanishing-point evidently. She complained bitterly of being 'pigged in with these nasty blacks,' at the station

when she found an excursion party about to take the same train, and mosquitoes would finish the business, quite. Charles was almost severe in rebuking her. 'I don't mind traveling with my fellow-creatures in the least, Pigott, and these Virginians make no objection to doing so, but if you are really so sensitive you can go in the luggage van. But there's the road to Heaven; what shall you do about that, pray?' he said to her. 'I like to hear you *preach* about 'em, Mr. Charles, but as to sittin' by 'em, I can't abide it, not if it was ever so, 'opin' you'll excuse me sayin' so,' she replied, much to my amusement."

"Pigott is not the first person who has not enjoyed seeing principles reduced to practice. Their benevolence has been well described by Mr. Sidney Smith — 'A, who wonders why B does not relieve C,'"

Mrs. Blunt.

"You miss your relatives, do you not? I am not surprised," said Claudia to Gerald.

"Your cousin is a truly agreeable and enlightened man, and your aunt has been a second mother to you — it is perfectly natural," commented Mr. Hyde.

But as it happened Gerald was thinking that he was glad to have things again on the old footing, glad to have all "outsiders" excluded from the home circle, from which he had felt himself in a measure shut out by the foreign element. Claudia and her kindred had become so much more to him than the people he had until then called and felt his own that he was himself surprised to find himself firmly bound to these "foreigners," and an alien with his father's kindred comparatively.

"It was a pleasure to see them. But I can't say I am sorry to have them go. We are so comfortable as we are," he replied with a smile. "I thought to myself, 'now we shall be comfortable,' when I came in

from the fields this afternoon. I've been felling some rails to mend the fence, where it has been broken away around the hill-meadows, and I'm tired, and no addition to any party. Don't think me sulky if I sit over here and hold my tongue in 'several languages,' will you? Flanders wanted me to go back with him. They are having a grand jollification over there to-night — but I had no wish to do so, for one thing. And the whole business is disgusting. Hargreaves wired home by proxy that he was dead, and got a lot of money out of his people for his funeral in that way, and is using some of it up in a supper. Our taste in jokes differs; and it would be rather awkward under the circumstances to be his guest, so I declined Flanders's pressing solicitations to join the party."

"What a shocking thing to do. How *could* he do it?" said Claudia.

"Want of money, and want of honor and honesty! The fellow was a gentleman once, but so long since, I fancy he has almost forgotten it himself," said Gerald. "He is going to pieces rapidly in the breakers. When honor dies it does not matter much what becomes of the man. There is no great worth in a pinch of dishonored dust which may never stop a hole even, and keep the wind away."

"You are wrong there, my boy. We can easily estimate the value of every soul and every body by the price paid for it by our common Father and Creator. Let us rather confess that we can claim no credit for not having fallen into every vice that we condemn. When we blame others harshly we are like the lame man who marvels that the blind can't see, or the deaf man who wonders that his neighbor goes limping. We are each and all stained through and through with our own sins and infirmities, revolted only by those of our neighbor. Let us be thankful that we are created in the glorious and indestructible Image, and hope that

somehow, somewhere, the likeness to our Father may be perfected in each one of us. My own belief has always been that life is an arc of which we see but a small part here," said Mr. Hyde; "and that good must reign supreme, and triumph eventually over all evil — in fulfillment rather than destruction."

"I like your theory, sir. And I hope you may be right," said Gerald, looking at the old man affectionately.

He then exchanged a look with Claudia, that plainly said, on her side, "Is he not the noblest and dearest of men and fathers?" and on his, "I love him as if he were my own."

"It is very nice to see you sitting there at work again," he said to her. "When you are done, say '*To Chloe jealous.*' We've had no poetry for weeks."

"I'll say it now, if you like," replied Claudia.

Gerald slipped into a big chair, shaded his eyes with a fan, so that he could see and not be seen, and Claudia began. When she got to —

"So when I am wearied with wand 'ring all day  
To thee, my delight, in the evening I come;  
No matter what beauties I saw in my way:  
They were but my visits; but thou art my *home*,"

he took a long look at her, sitting there, so fair, so sweet, so good, and said to his own heart for the thousandth time: "'They were but my visits; but thou art my *home*.'" He thought he had never seen her so lovely, and he was quite right, for she never had been. Her eyes shone with peculiar, extraordinary brilliancy; her cheeks were flushed with a rich veiled bloom; her whole face and figure expressed the lovely repose of a heart which had felt and suffered deeply, and long circled like a bird under stormy skies, to drop at last safe and happy into its own warm nest.

"Go on, please. This *is* luxury," he said aloud; and it was.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"Dear rose! thy joy's undimmed,  
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,  
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed."

*Browning.*

"DON'T you want to come and see the new smoke-house, Miss Hyde?" said Gerald, appearing at the pantry-door one morning about a month after this. "It is in place, and I quite pride myself on it. I've had the old lock put back as you wished, and here is the key of the bastille."

"Thank you; and I do, indeed, wish to see it. I've chosen a motto for it of which *I* am very vain, 'T is Greece, but living Greece no more,' " said Claudia, dropping the big key in her old-fashioned leathern basket, with the half-effaced Hyde crest stamped on it — part of her heritage of housekeeping.

"I'll put it up in illuminated text myself, this afternoon," said Gerald, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps you'd like to see my pantry. Come in! Mind the flour-barrel, unless you want to be a miller. Those demijohns contain nothing stronger than vinegar and mineral waters, in spite of labels and appearances. Don't my preserves make you feel hungry?" said Claudia, pointing to the long rows of them — 'a heap of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd, with jellies, smother, soother, than the creamy curd, and lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon.' "

"They make me downright greedy. 'Spiced dainties every one.' "

"Here! taste my quinces before I seal them up," said Claudia, offering him a spoon and a jar. "Aren't they good?"

"Delicious."

"I always take especial pains with them, for father likes them better than any other sweet thing. I have two promising kettles on this minute, and, as there are long pauses between the clauses, I am reading Keats on the wing," said Claudia. "My reading is chiefly done by snatches, and always has been, and I generally flavor my goodies, for myself at least, with something more permanently interesting. Now I'll show you one of my most cherished possessions. Make a long arm, please, and get down that jug there," said Claudia.

Gerald obeyed.

"A veritable black-jack, you will respectfully perceive and acknowledge! See the date, 1646, and the 'C. R.' of my martyred king blown in the bottom."

"So it is, by Jove!" said Gerald, inspecting it closely.

"We use it sometimes on very great occasions. I wished to put some flowers in it for Ada's wedding, but I was afraid it might somehow fall into the hands of Pontius or the boys."

"Short work they would have made of it; better keep it under lock and key. Can you come now? You look a model housewife," said Gerald, glancing at her long apron and straw cuffs.

"A great deal more virtuous and industrious than I am. It is very easy, pleasant work," replied Claudia, and went out with him, and charmed him afresh by her unaffected interest in and sympathy with his work.

"Claudia's naturalness and sincerity and freshness of feeling are so delightful! Her interest in the smoke-house is not interest in me, either — there is no hum-

bug about her. She gave me credit for my good ideas, but she pointed out the defects, too," he thought, as they returned to the house. He followed her into the kitchen and leaned against the door.

"It is an off day with me," he said, "and you've no idea how lazy I feel."

"Now that victory perches on the smoke-house?"

"Exactly!" He still waited and watched her vigorously stirring her kettles and shifting them about. He perched on the end of the kitchen-table at last, and, picking up her book, glanced at it.

Mammy floundered in and out, gathering vegetables in the garden, making expeditions to the ante-bellum well; Pontius came and filched sugar off the shelves, and went his way for the mail; the boys came in for twine, and the hatchet, and various things.

But in spite of these unromantic accompaniments and interruptions, Claudia's cheeks flushed pink and pinker, as she talked to Gerald and heard him talk, and it was not the fire that did it; and Gerald's eyes followed her every movement, and found something poetic, the very essence of poetry, indeed, in it all—the primeval woman preparing food for the primeval man. In other words, the whitewashed, sunny old kitchen, with its homely suggestions of home, made as good a background as any other for the old idyll, and, so far from making lovers prosaic, was itself made ideal by the grace and glory of true affection.

Mammy it was who tired of the situation, and put an end to it.

"Go 'long, honey, I'se gwine clean up here. Git off my table," she said to Gerald, with the familiarity of her race and position, flourishing a rolling-pin at him.

"I beg your pardon, mammy, am I trespassing?" said Gerald, good-naturedly obeying. "Blame Miss



Hyde if I am. She can't make good things to eat unless she is amused, she says. You certainly keep a nice kitchen. I never saw brighter pans; and I see you've got some nice old copper kettles. What a huge fireplace, Miss Hyde. I suppose you have not long discarded spits and the like?"

"Mammy always says there is no roasting a turkey in any other way, and father agrees with her. And when you get one of mammy's nicest dishes, you may be perfectly certain she has gone back to her oven. Everything is a great deal nicer cooked that way, eh, mammy?"

"'Cose dey is," agreed mammy. "Dis here fool-stove ain't wuth shucks." She gave it a vicious poke and rattle as she spoke, and Pontius came in just then with the mail-bag.

"What a nice mail! Several letters for you, and for me, too. Take the bag in to father, Pontius," said Claudia.

Gerald glanced at his letters. "One from Mellin," he said. "I'm very glad. It has been a long while since I heard from the old chap." He opened it and said of it, "My uncle is enjoying himself tremendously yachting in the Mediterranean with his wife and son. He talks of going to Iceland," he said of a second — "a very kind letter from my uncle himself."

"I have one from Willard. He is giving a ball, and wants us to come down; there's a note inclosed for you from his mother. They want us to spend two or three days. What do you say to it?" asked Claudia.

"I can't go. I don't feel in the humor for that sort of thing at all," said Gerald.

Claudia's face fell. "You won't go!" she said, in a tone of such unaffected disappointment that Gerald smiled.

"I don't think I should add in the least to anybody's pleasure, and I don't feel at all keen about it for myself."

"But they entertain charmingly, and they ask you particularly, and I thought it would be so pleasant," said Claudia ruefully.

"Do you wish me to go?" asked Gerald alertly.

"I think we should enjoy it," replied Claudia. "I have not had a holiday for an age. And you will be better for one, for you have been out of spirits lately."

"Should you like me to go?" asked Gerald, with all his own quiet insistence.

"I should," confessed Claudia.

"Very well. I hope the moths have not destroyed my dress-suit, and that I have not forgotten how to dance altogether. Do you think Uncle Beverly would lend me a choker? Hello! look at *this*!" said Gerald, holding out a note to her, and putting another letter in his pocket unread as he spoke; "Hargreaves, poor devil! He is in prison, and asks me to come to him. Hang the fellow! I don't see why I should, I'm sure. I wonder what he has been doing. Something rascally, I'll be bound. He is no innocent victim of a mistake or a conspiracy. Not he!"

"Oh! poor soul! He seems in such trouble. Do go and see him, and do what you can for him, even if he has behaved badly. We are none of us good, if it comes to that," pleaded Claudia.

"H'm. I suppose I must," said Gerald.

"I knew you would!" exclaimed Claudia, with conviction, "for he says he has n't a single friend."

"None that he can send for, perhaps. But I'll wager there will be a woman found to stand up for him. There was never yet a villain so black that some good woman did not pronounce him a white crow."

"That is only another way of saying that in this we are wiser than you men."

"Better, I grant."

"Wiser, unless you want to destroy and not to reform criminals. Only think what a man must feel when he finds every heart steeled against him, and every hand lifted to strike, except that one faithful, forgiving, loving creature's—the only thing left to represent the love of God in a world of hate to a darkened, wretched soul. Oh! I only hope what you say is true," said Claudia earnestly. "It would cover a multitude of our own sins if we all had more of that spirit; it needs no defense. I often wonder why the world is so pitiless where it should be most pitiful—so entirely without love or excuse for those who most need it."

"You are right, Flower-Aspect. You always are," said Gerald gently. "I shall not be home until late. Good-bye."

He rode into Wyvvern forthwith, and was directed to a red-brick jail, surrounded by a high wall. The sight of the grated windows quickened the feeling of compassion already aroused in his heart.

A jovial jailer admitted him. "Come to see a friend? What number?" he asked.

"Has poor Hargreaves no longer a *name*!" thought Gerald, giving it.

"Oh. Yes, yes. 49; in for horse-stealing. In a bad way. Tried to kill himself last night," said the jailer, as if he were saying that the prisoner had dined at five o'clock. He led the way to a cell at the end of the dark corridor and put his head in. "Friend to see you," he said; and Gerald, entering, experienced for the first time the startling and novel sensation of being locked in. His impulse was to call out to the retreating jailer, and demand to be released, but in-

stead he advanced toward Hargreaves; and when he saw him sitting on the side of his cot, white as the wall behind him, unshaven, and wretched, and ghastly, he held out his hand, saying kindly:—

“Sorry to see you like this, Hargreaves. I only got your note this morning, and came at once.”

The color rushed to the white face now, as Hargreaves shook hands.

“Thanks, awfully,” he said. “You may think it awfully queer of me to be sending for you, now that I’ve come to grief, when you kicked me out the last time I saw you. And served me quite right, too. If you were to kick me across this entire continent I should thank you for it now. Flanders is a fool, and I could n’t send for that shop-keeping chap, Wardour—he’s gone upon a visit, too. And I’m in a devil of a hole. I’m in for the penitentiary unless I can be got off. I thought you might, perhaps, interest yourself for another Englishman.”

“So I will. I’ll be your friend and stand by you and do all I can,” said Gerald heartily, touched by the constrained manner, the self-abasement, so different to his usual easy familiarity and confidence, and moved by the sight of his misery.

On hearing these kind words, so kindly spoken, Hargreaves the hardened, the cynical, wept aloud.

“I—I can’t help it. My nerves are all gone. I—you are—” he tried to explain and apologize. “I thought I hadn’t a friend in the world, when you didn’t come, and I tried to end it all last night. And I wish I had succeeded.”

Claudia’s words of loving wisdom came back to Gerald, and he felt thoroughly rebuked when he remembered how lightly and selfishly he had been disposed to treat this appeal, how great his responsibility had been, and that it was entirely owing to her

that he had come at all. "Dear girl!" he thought, and said aloud: —

"You did very wrong — very wrong. See here, Hargreaves, you put all that out of your head, and keep it out, and look things in the face. I'll help you pull out of this. First of all, though, tell me all about it, and we'll see what can be done. Have you eaten anything this morning? No? I thought not. *That's* the first thing to be done, then." Gerald went to the door and hammered — a lusty, freeman's blow — on it, with his cane. The good-natured jailer promptly appeared, overflowing with winks and nods and grins.

Gerald stepped out with him and had a word. The result was a nice breakfast, though it was dinner-time, brought in shortly with great satisfaction by the jailer, who said, "Now you are actin' sensible," when he set it down; "them rolls is first-rate; my wife made 'em, and there ain't no better coffee in the State of Virginia."

Gerald got out a paper and affected to read it, but, being pressed by Hargreaves, had the tact to join him in a cup of coffee, and found it hot and strong and sweet, and all that had been claimed for it.

"Now," said Gerald, "we'll see where we stand. You feel better, don't you, old fellow?"

Hargreaves confessed that he did wonderfully, and so much had he been helped by human sympathy and strengthened in body and brain by all these tonics, that he was able to give a full, clear account of all his troubles, and the vices that had occasioned them, and of what in his opinion had caused his vices, and no doubt had done so, in a measure. It was a long story, and a very sad one, and he did not spare himself. It had the pathos of every sad story, whether of sin or sorrow, truthfully told, and, as Gerald listened, his interest and compassion increased.

"You were evidently drunk, and did not know what you were doing. You must have counsel," he said, at last.

"I can't; I have no money," said Hargreaves. "That sort of thing costs tremendously."

"I'll get you a lawyer," promised Gerald. He could n't help it, with so many strings vibrating in his heart, but as he did so he thought, "That will take it *all*, pretty well!"

"I've played the fool—the rascal, Mildmay. I don't deserve it. Keep your money. I don't know that I can ever repay a shilling of it," said Hargreaves. "I may as well go hang! I am a thoroughly bad lot, and the less you have to do with me, the better."

"I'm the best judge of that," said Gerald, taking up his hunting-crop, and preparing to leave. "Keep up your courage. We'll pull you out somehow. Good-bye!"

"For all I'm a bad lot, I'll never forget this—never!" replied Hargreaves, and he never did.

Gerald then went to the best lawyer in Wyvvern, and put the case in his hands, ordered certain things in the way of comforts to be sent to Hargreaves, and galloped home, a very tired, but a very peaceful man, having in his heart the sweetest of earthly satisfactions, because the most divine.

He found Claudia still up, and waiting to hear what he had to say.

"I am glad I went," he said, "the poor fellow" (he was no longer a "poor devil") "had tried to take his life. It's a bad business all around, but Dodson thinks he can get him off, and then he must get away out of this."

"He *did*? How frightful! poor, poor soul!" said Claudia, much shocked.

"He is not altogether to blame. He has had hard

luck. He married a very beautiful woman to whom he was devoted, he tells me, and she ran away with the man he thought his greatest friend, and he seems to have made bad worse by drink, and debts, and all that. Lately he has been buying horses and selling them in Washington without paying for them — a process to which the original owners naturally objected. And he has been running head over heels into debt, and they have come down on him like a trip-hammer. He has been drifting about the world for fifteen years or so, living at loose ends."

"Are you *sure* he is better? — that he won't try to — to do it again," said Claudia, still pale with the reflected horror of his despair. "He ought not to be left alone."

"I got him to take some food, and I think he will be all right. I offered to stay with him, lest he should, but he would n't hear of it, and I'm not sure it would have been allowed, in fact. However, I sent him in a sleeping-draught which the doctor ordered. And I took another precaution. I told the chap in charge to put another fellow in with him, and he promised he would."

"Do you think he could possibly forget or neglect to do it? But no; he could n't; no human being could be so heartless! I sha'n't close my eyes to-night for thinking of him. Tell me what he said, and just how he seemed. I hope you could comfort him."

"I tried," said Gerald. "I felt sorry for the fellow when I heard his story. Half the men in Hades have been sent there by your sex; but *all* the men who get to the other place owe it to the same influence, so I suppose it is all right. Women are curious creatures, though, Miss Hyde. Hargreaves says his wife kissed him good-bye, and begged him to come back soon,

with her trunks all corded and strapped and labeled in the next room ready for her flight, as he afterwards discovered. I don't wonder that the lowest circle of the Mahometan inferno is reserved for hypocrites, when I hear a thing like that."

"It was not a refinement of cruelty — it was remorse. I know how she felt. She had a weak hope, too, that he would forgive her, and think of her kindly in time. What else did he say?"

Thus encouraged, Gerald gave her all the particulars of his visit, except his share in it. About this his very reticence was a revelation to her acute perceptions. She more than half suspected what he had done.

"It was very good of you to go to him. I know you were all that was kind, and did all you could; I am glad that you are my friend — it gives me a share in all your good deeds, you know," she said, and gave him her hand with the sweetest look in the world.

Now Gerald always felt himself, when with her, in the presence of all noble things, and, hearing her speak in this way, he looked at her with eyes full of reverent tenderness. "Ah! Flower-Aspect, what a world this would be, to be sure, if all the women in it were like *you*! I don't think much of your friend, but your friend's friend is a jewel. She has all the brightness of the diamond, and all the softness of the pearl. God bless her!"

"Thank you. He has blessed me in so many things — in my friend, too, say what you will," said Claudia in a low voice.



## CHAPTER XXII.

"The present moment is our ain,  
The neist we never saw."

MR. EGERTON went down with Claudia and Gerald by train to "Montelle," the Guests' place, "three counties distant," as Mr. Hyde put it. As it chanced, they were detained at the station by a late train, and it was there that Flanders joined Claudia, and gave her a full account of Gerald's dealings with Hargreaves and himself in his capacity of "the only Irishman that ever kept a secret." It was very sweet to her, to hear him so generously praised.

"I can well believe him capable of any and every good deed," she said; and listened again as to music, for she could not speak what she gladly heard, lest she should reveal the hidden joy of her heart. Except when she talked to Keith, she was very chary of mentioning so much as his name at home, and only God and the child heard it without necessity — God, unspoken, comprehending all; the child hearing, but understanding nothing.

On reaching "Montelle," they were received at a house with a welcome in every pore, and by a charming hostess in Mrs. Guest, a typical Southern gentlewoman.

"Quite a place. Is it an extensive property?" Gerald had said as they approached, and he dropped back into his native element when he crossed the threshold of the thoroughly luxurious establishment.

Mr. Guest's satisfaction in having Claudia under his roof would have been patent to anybody — to Gerald it was painfully distinct. The place was a fine old colonial one. It had been turned over to decorators and florists for the occasion, who, with canvas, bunting, mirrors, flowers, had made it ready for several hundred guests, who arrived by special trains or in carriages, and completed a brilliant *ensemble*.

"How nice all this is!" said Gerald to Claudia that night from the hearthrug, commanding a *suite* of rooms that looked one huge conservatory brilliantly lit, and filling rapidly with guests. "All Washington, Baltimore, and Richmond must be here. How charming some people look, too! Is one allowed, with the limited male appreciation of such mysteries, to admire a gown that suits the wearer to perfection?"

"Are n't we 'Bower' birds fine, in our best plumage? To be sure, my gown is not likely to be admired by anybody else here to-night, among all these Birds of Paradise — it is n't to be supposed that a simple white dress made in Wyvvern will witch the world of wealth and fashion. But I don't mind. I am quite content. And I am glad you like me."

"None of them are half so nice as you look, or could possibly look half so nice as you are," protested Gerald, "though for that matter, you look just as refined and lovely in one of your simple morning-gowns. That gauzy stuff all about your shoulders suits you, though, and that pretty old topaz necklace, too!"

"Father's wedding gift to mother. The brooch was my great-great-grandmother's. She used to wear it herself at Ranelagh. I get my name from her, and it has come to me through all the intermediate Claudias. I am very fond of it."

"It is all very effective — there is an air of elegance about you. You match these surroundings. You ought

to be a rich woman, Miss Hyde, you would grace a home like this. There is your cousin now, coming this way."

"*You* match them, for that matter. As for me, I am much too simple in my tastes and habits to be a woman of fashion, or properly to sustain what is called a great position. I am much happier, and quite content as I am! All this is very nice and very enjoyable occasionally, but —"

She stopped, for Willard Guest, with a bright, eager face, was saying, "Come see the azaleas in the next room, Claudia, and then you are to open the ball with me."

"Oh! Willard, I can't. Choose somebody else," said Claudia.

"Nonsense, Claudia! Why not? I shall do nothing of the sort. I got it up to give you pleasure, and you are to be pleased, and to be pleasant, and do as I wish," said Mr. Guest, with determination.

Claudia turned a look upon Gerald that plainly said, "Come to my rescue;" but Gerald withdrew himself actually and verbally from the discussion by moving off a little apart from them, and keeping silence.

"I tell you, Willard, I'll not dance the *first* dance — the first anything is horrid. I'll give you the second instead, or any others you may like to have," said Claudia at last.

Mr. Guest was vexed, and looked it. He took her card, however, and put his name down for several dances, "to begin with," and went off.

"Now *he* will ask me to give him some dances," thought Claudia. But not so.

Gerald said instead, "Why didn't you go with your cousin? You ought not to decline such an honor, and he dances extremely well. I noticed him at your sister's wedding."

Here Mr. Guest returned with three men, whom he presented in rapid succession to his cousin.

"Shall I introduce you to some of our Baltimore beauties?" he asked Gerald.

"Not just now, thanks," said Gerald; and stayed where he was until Claudia went off on the arm of a handsome young Belgian. He shifted his position a little then, and watched her, and walked about among the guests observing them, and observed by not a few of them in return. But his heart was heavy within him, and he would not dance, and had never been less inclined to make merry. He went and sat down at last by himself in the library, after glancing at the titles of some of the books, and looking at the pictures. "Is it at all likely that she would give up all this, and a nice fellow into the bargain, to marry a poor devil like me? Ought I to ask her to do such a thing? Ought I to stay on at the 'Bower,' and go on with this perfectly hopeless, miserable business?" he was asking himself there for about two hours, and frowned so fiercely, and meditated so deeply, that everybody who saw him was scared off except a waiter, who said, "Have anything, sir?" at random as he passed by, and got a curt and gloomy response, very unlike a man who was particularly polite to servants.

Meanwhile Claudia was dancing with good partners and talking with clever ones, and was in the midst of a gayety that ought to have made her at least gay, and would have done so, but for the fact that Gerald was nowhere to be seen. She beguiled her partners into this room and that; she even glanced into the library, but did not see him half hidden behind a screen.

When it was quite late, she was herself seized by her cousin and taken into the conservatory, where his annual proposal was repeated with more than his usual vehemence and ardor. When Claudia had earnestly

begged him never to allude to the subject again, and had made it quite clear that she knew and had always known her own mind and heart in the matter, there was a pause, and then Mr. Guest said to her: —

“As your cousin, Claudia, I am going to ask you to be careful how you admit to any intimacy that young Englishman who came with you.”

“Why?” said Claudia quickly.

“Oh! I don’t say there is anything wrong. Only you had best be careful. They are coming over here by the dozen, and many of them have left their country for their country’s good. In short, I don’t like to say it while he is under my roof, but I think I should be very much on my guard if I were you.”

“Father thinks differently; he congratulates the State often on her good fortune in being re-colonized by the very people who originally settled here and who made it what it is. He thinks it a valuable and agreeable addition to our population — in race, religion, and in every respect they are in sympathy with us in all essentials. The more the better, he says, and I agree with him. If you were speaking of the hordes of emigrants from other nations that are flooding other States, I could better understand your prejudice — but the English, and the class of English people that we are getting for the most part, should be cordially welcomed by us, for we owe everything that we most value to our English heritage. I think they are, for the most part. I am glad to say that very few Virginians feel as you do, though there are no Anglo-maniacs among us — and you a Guest, and inheriting all your money from your English relatives!”

“As you please about that. I was speaking of Mr. Mildmay. He may be all right, but I don’t believe in his being taken in without credentials, and put in charge of uncle’s affairs, and treated exactly as though

he were a relative or very old friend. What do you know of him really? I remonstrated with uncle at the time, but he seemed to have implicit confidence in him, based on complete ignorance of him."

"We know him thoroughly now, and our confidence in him is still *implicit*."

"You are a woman; as a man, I look at his position in the family with different eyes from yours. I — I don't like it."

"Father gave him his position and has never had any reason to regret it. He likes and trusts Mr. Mildmay thoroughly. You must see for yourself, Willard, that he is a gentleman," said Claudia, controlling her anger, and speaking calmly if coldly.

"Uncle Addison is the best but least suspicious of men. I've known a lot of those fellows, and out of them all there is only one that I would be willing to see domesticated on the same footing with a sister of mine," insisted Mr. Guest.

"Never has Mr. Mildmay said or done anything — not the least thing to justify such suspicion. He has father's entire confidence and respect. And he has mine. He is our friend. Father says that he is honorable and punctilious to a fault, and we have no friend that we value more — *none*," said Claudia, with rising color and sparkling eyes. "These vague accusations are very unlike you, Willard, and very unjust to him. But if everybody in the world said such things of him, they would have no weight with me, for I *know* him; I am his friend; I will never believe evil of any friend."

"Oh! all right. Only that Butterworth colony is a byword in the neighborhood, and none of your relations approved of Uncle Addison's course at the time. And when I heard that one of them was actually *in jail*, I thought I ought to give you a hint that might

save trouble. If he is the family idol, though —” He stopped, deeply annoyed. “The man who gives advice under any provocation ought to be kicked for his stupidity,” he added.

“I have no doubt that you meant it kindly, Willard. But believe me it was quite unnecessary. Shall we go back?” said Claudia.

Back they went to the ball-room accordingly, but as it chanced she had not been seated there ten minutes before a certain old cousin (the widow of a notability in the State, high in the councils of the family), joined her, and, taking a seat, took up also the *rôle* which Mr. Guest had just thankfully dropped.

“Delightful evening we’ve been having, have we not, dear? Willard entertains to perfection, and, as he is one of the few gentlemen left in the State who can afford to keep up the traditions of his family and class, I take great pride in the affair,” she began. “I suppose you two will get everything settled between you before long; and any girl might envy you — Willard is such a dear fellow, and such a thorough gentleman. How handsome he looks to-night — the only thing that spoils him is the Willard nose. The Guests all have such beautiful straight noses — mamma’s was her greatest beauty — yours is something like it. You need not look offended, Claudia, everybody knows that you and Willard are sweethearts, and when I got my invitation, I thought the time had come to announce it, and I was delighted. Do you know, dear, I was anxious for a while lest you should get entangled with that young Englishman who is here with you to-night.”

“You are growing sentimental, cousin,” said Claudia lightly, “and imagine dangers that don’t exist. There is no question of marriage between Willard and me — we are, and mean to remain cousins and good friends, but that is all. As for Mr. Mildmay, he always says of himself that he is not a marrying man.”

"Well, dear, be careful — remember what you owe to the family — remember that you don't know anything about him, or his people. Not that I have any prejudice against English people. We have a delightful colony of them in our county. Only when it comes to *marrying*, you ought to marry *Willard*. I can't think that you would be such a goose — yes, I must say it, such a *goose* as to reject a man like that, Claudia. It would be such folly!" said Mrs. Herbert, with a sharp look at Claudia, and a shrewd suspicion of the real state of affairs.

"In a thing like that, excuse my saying, cousin, that I could listen to no one, with all possible respect for you. I have never understood how any human being could be willing to 'make a marriage,' as it is called; or to break one off, except for the very gravest reasons. Who shall decide what is folly and what wisdom in such a matter? For myself, much as I love my kindred, and distrust my judgment in many things, no one could influence me in that; not even my father."

"What! not your father, Claudia?"

"No; God and my own heart alone shall decide it for me; the obligations are so holy, the responsibility so purely personal, the consequences so far-reaching," declared Claudia, with warmth.

"Claudia, where has Mr. Mildmay gone? Do you know? I am especially anxious that he as a stranger should enjoy himself. It is almost impossible to find anybody in this crowd. Has he been dancing, do you know?" said Mrs. Guest, coming up to them, and at that moment Gerald appeared in the door close by. "Ah, there you are! I was looking for you, Mr. Mildmay. Come and be introduced to the prettiest girl in the South. I have twice tried to find you. I hope you have not been drifting into corners — that you have been enjoying yourself?" she said, advancing toward him.



"Thanks. I was just about to ask Miss Hyde for a dance. That settled, I am entirely at your disposition," said Gerald, and when it appeared that Claudia could and would dance with him, then and there, it was agreed that he should report himself later to Mrs. Guest. This he did — a good deal later, in spite of his fears, and fancies, and resolutions, and forebodings — in spite of himself altogether.

For the power that drags reluctant waves away from the shore, and drives them out upon an unresting sea, is the power that sends them rushing back again.

Willard Guest came upon the pair in the library about one o'clock, and it was now his turn to be miserable. They were not talking to each other at the time. Gerald was thoughtfully picking from the dress of the only woman in the world a little feather from her fan that had dropped on it, and Claudia had no words. She had just said, looking at his *boutonnière*, "Where did you get your lilies of the valley? Do you like them?" And Gerald had replied: "I do. The first time I ever saw you, Flower-Aspect, you wore a bunch of them in your gown — and a blessed sight it was for me, and a blessed day, though I did n't know it. I shall always think that, come what may."

Only for a moment did Mr. Guest, unobserved by them, watch them, but from that moment he knew the truth. When Gerald looked up and saw him, he started up, saying, "I will leave Miss Hyde with you. I promised to go to Mrs. Guest," and took himself off in haste.

Soon carriages, and trains, and every sort of conveyance were taking away all the guests, except the large party domiciled at "Montelle," and Mr. Guest had to see them all off, and Claudia looked up Cousin Miles. The gentlemen of the band put their instruments in bags that bulged mysteriously on receiving them, and

rather murderously, as if containing corpses instead of 'cellos and cornets; sleepy waiters began to extinguish the lights, and close the shutters; the ball was over.

"Are you tired and sleepy, my dear?" asked Cousin Miles of Claudia.

"Not in the least! I was never so wide awake or less tired in my life. I could jump over the moon this minute! What a beautiful ball it has been. I am so sorry it is over," she replied.

"You look it, upon my word," said Cousin Miles. "But I was nodding when you found me. And think of my being so foolish as to indulge in lobster salad! It is eat and be merry, for *to-morrow* you die, *before* you take it; but afterwards, my dear, afterwards, it is *to-day* you die, and a very different thing. Did you try the turtle soup?"

"Was there turtle soup, cousin?"

"Was there *turtle soup*! Why, where have you been all the evening? Oh, youth! youth! Good-night, my dear. I'm going to bed — perchance to sleep."

The trio spent two days very agreeably at "Montelle" after that, but Claudia saw Gerald only, as it were, through a pane of glass — as well as ever, without coming near him. On the third the trio made their adieux and acknowledgments, and were pressed to come again and stay longer, and keep on coming again and staying longer still, Southern fashion; and then they went to the station. There Mr. Egerton stepped inside, and Claudia and Gerald walked up and down the platform with Mr. Guest. The train came around a curve with a rush while Claudia, off her guard, was standing near the track. And in a flash, a second, this happened — Claudia's light dress became entangled in the great wheel, and Gerald, quick as thought, put his arm around her, and swept her out of the very jaws of death!

Not until Claudia glanced up, amazed, into Gerald's white face and down at her dress, did she fully realize what had happened. She heard his low "Thank God!" she saw him tremble from head to foot, and, turning, saw another white face — her cousin's, and heard him say, "You *just* escaped!"

It was her cousin who put her on the train — Gerald bolted into the smoking-car completely unnerved, and stayed there for an hour. Every time he thought of what *might* have been, he began to tremble again, and he at last got some brandy from a friendly fellow-passenger, and prescribed for himself a rousing dose. The light of his eyes, the joy of his heart, so nearly snatched from his very side in that frightful way! Oh! how clear it was that she was both. He was still so pale when he joined Mr. Egerton and Claudia that the former remarked it.

"You gave me a horrible fright!" was all that he said to Claudia, but he looked at her with a tenderness which he could not repress.

Claudia, too, was very grave, and Mr. Egerton, never talkative, subsided behind his paper. In this way it came about that a party which had started out in brilliant spirits from the "Bower" three days before, returned in a very subdued and chastened mood.

"Don't tell father," said Claudia to Mr. Egerton, and Mr. Hyde knew nothing of it for a week, and then got a carefully medicated version of it from Claudia herself.

Gerald went at once to his room, changed his dress, and surprised Claudia by coming down almost immediately, and saying that he was just off for Washington for a week. She felt, of course, as any woman would have done in the same position, that she had a sort of right to know more, but would ask him nothing; and he left within an hour, leaving her with ten thousand un-

answered questions in her mind, and a much disquieted heart. Neither would she have been tranquilized if she had known the truth, which was that Gerald had gone away to prepare himself for going away, indeed, for good and all!

Reaching Washington, Gerald went to a modest hotel, and took one of those delightfully cheering and home-like apartments that are reserved for such travelers, and there, in that barren and solitary waste of cheap furniture, and hideous carpet, and dismal wall-paper, without so much as a comfortable chair to be miserable in, he sat and gazed into an empty grate or out into a forlorn courtyard, and thought, thought, thought, and could come to no decision, or, reaching one, felt that it was intolerable, or another, felt that it was impossible. He called at the British Minister's; he looked in shop-windows; he must have walked a hundred miles. The Minister, who had known his uncle, received him with much kindness, and he found in one of the agreeable young attachés a brother of his friend Mellin; but he had a dispiriting sense of his shabbiness and failure, and was so oppressed by the problem that had to be solved that he declined to dine there. The shop-windows seemed filled chiefly with things he would like to give Claudia.

He saw in one of them a very beautiful ivory prayer book. "How she would like that!" he thought, and went in to ask the price. But an elegant-minded young gentleman, after assuring him that it was "not much," informed him that it was "thirty dollars with the white and gold markers," and poor Gerald had to walk out again.

All his rambles brought him no nearer to the solution of three mysteries — how could he go, how stay, what should he do?

He was still sitting in his room at the end of a week,

thinking of these things, with his mind further impressed by the necessity of leaving that hotel at once, if he meant to pay his bill, and troubled by some agreeable doubts as to whether he had not stayed too long already. He got out his purse to see exactly how much money he had, and was shocked to see what inroads had been made on his bank-bills by his modest expenditures.

"By Jove! I've got precious little left!" he thought, and his hotel bill loomed up more threateningly than ever. The tragic comedy of the situation made him feel more acutely than ever his unhappy position. In this dilemma he did what nine men out of ten would have done. He got out his pipe and tobacco, and, after filling that pipe and putting it in his mouth, fumbled in his pockets for matches, and brought out instead a letter — the letter that he had put in that pocket that day in the kitchen, not recognizing the handwriting, meaning to read it later.

"Hello! What's this? Where did this come from?" he thought. He cut it open composedly. He found that it was from his uncle's solicitors — that his uncle's yacht had gone down with all on board; that he was Sir Gerald Mildmay, and had come into "The Towers" and thirty thousand pounds a year; that Hobson, of Hobson and Blow, was respectfully, very respectfully, indeed, his, etc., and that a check for five hundred pounds was inclosed as an *en cas*!

On reading this astounding communication, with all its tremendous consequences, the pipe dropped from Gerald's mouth to the floor. "Poor old fellow! Poor old uncle! And the child! And the mother, too! How terrible," were his only thoughts for at least five minutes. Not long truly — yet not reckoned as only that; not much in the long debit and credit account that had been running between them, yet something set against the monster that with us all would have all — *self*.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Thus to pluck the spotless rose of her womanhood  
To give it unto me."

*The Saints' Tragedy.*

ON his return, Claudia's eyes detected three things in Gerald before he had been in the house ten minutes: an unusual gravity, though he was habitually quiet; a serenity much beyond his usual composure, that gave sweetness to all he said and did, and an air of high purpose. She felt sure in her own mind that there was some special cause for these; that it was not a mood. He looked, in fact, as knights of old may have looked after kneeling all night by their armor in preparation for their *accolade*; as a king should look on the day of his coronation; as a good man looks when the depths of his nature are stirred, and he has sacredly accepted sacred responsibilities; and her heart stood still before the hidden joy or sorrow that she knew with a woman's instinct to be at hand, stood trembling before the door of the unknown, not surprised, not impatient, only filled with awe. He made the rounds of the farm as usual, attending to all his duties that afternoon. He felt like a somnambulist as he did so — nothing was changed — everything was changed!

Tea over, he cast up accounts with Mr. Hyde, played chess with him as usual, and after a while sought his room. When he came down again the dining-room was empty, but on the table was Claudia's work-basket. Remembering that his watch-chain had snapped that morning, he thought he would help

himself to a silk thread, and reunite the severed links. He smiled as he turned over the contents of the basket — Keith's socks, a cravat of her father's which she was turning, the gloves he had worn and torn at the ball, beautifully mended; buttons, bobbins, but no silk.

"In this little box, perhaps," he thought, and opened it and came upon a note of his. It was the only note he had ever written her — a careless line from Wyvvern, written early in their acquaintance, from the "Briars," asking her to send his fishing-rod. It looked well worn. There was, beside, a picture she had once shown him of her mother, and a fair curl tied with a bit of blue ribbon, and marked "Keith's hair." Claudia had brought the box down that very day to show Wyn "his dear grandmother," and had put it in her basket temporarily until she should take it upstairs again. Gerald guiltily closed the box in all haste, and gave up all idea of finding a skein of silk.

"The dear girl! To think of her keeping it," he thought. "Why does n't she come? Where is she?" He sat down to wait for her. But she did n't come. His courage suddenly forsook him, now that he meant to put it to the touch and win or lose all as a poor man.

Meanwhile Claudia, also in a panic, was out on the porch, sitting there in the dark, trying to see the invisible. Gerald, impatient, walked out into the hall at last, looking for her, and she, coming in from the porch, met him there.

"I've been star-gazing — the night is very clear and fine, though there is no moon, and it is delightful out there," she said, and was about to pass by.

"Shall we go outside for awhile?" asked Gerald; and only the ear of affection could have heard the

indefinable something in his voice that made Claudia hurriedly and quite flightily say, "Oh! no; it is *so* much pleasanter here! There are so many bats about at this season;" and seat herself on the sofa.

"I thought you said it was delightful out there," remarked Gerald, still standing.

"So I did. So it was, earlier in the evening," Claudia nervously explained.

Gerald saw quite plainly that she was nervous, so he sat down by her, and talked to her in his own calm fashion of impersonal matters, for quite half an hour, giving her a surface account of his visit to Washington, by way of putting her at ease.

"There is a capital print-shop — I forget the street — that you would have reveled in. There was one Raphael Morghen's, the head of a boy, that was beautiful;" he then said: "By the bye, I brought you something."

"Did you?"

"I did; and here it is," said Gerald, producing a package from his pocket.

"Thank you," said Claudia. She took off the outer wrapper, and a dainty purple velvet box with a lock and key stood revealed. "How lovely! What a royal color it is, and such a dear little key!" said Claudia, honestly delighted. She would have loved an empty match-box, for that matter, if he had given it to her, but this was doubly charming as his gift, and in itself. "I wonder what is inside?"

"Something that I hope you will like. Open it," said Gerald, smiling.

"I am inclined to prolong my pleasure and whet my enjoyment, by guessing the contents. Oh! you *are* such a beauty!" said Claudia, apostrophizing her box.

"It can't be bonbons?"

"No."



"Violets?"

"No."

"Not jewelry, I *know*. Is it something personal or general?"

"Both."

"There doesn't seem anything worthy to go in such a box; it ought to be something of ivory or gold."

"It is more than worthy, and it *is* ivory and gold," said Gerald, rubbing his hands together, and enjoying as he always did her fresh enjoyment of every pleasure.

"I can't wait another minute now," said Claudia; and putting in the key, she turned it, lifted the lid, picked up her box, and ran over to the lamp, to get a better look. "A prayer book! Oh! how perfectly exquisite! It is the most beautiful thing *by far* that I ever saw," she cried, and with one of her own little impulsive movements she pressed it to her heart.

"It pleases you, then," said Gerald, rising and joining her.

"It *delights* me! I have privately and vainly wished for one for years. I might as well have wished for a necklace of moons! And the markers!" said Claudia, admiring the white ribbons and the gold anchor, cross, and sacred monogram. "You are quite sure it is for me and no mistake, I suppose?"

"Perfectly."

Claudia now opened the book and saw that he had written in it, "Claudia Hyde, from G. C. L. Mildmay," the date, and underneath, "Blessed are the pure in heart."

"It is *very* beautiful. Thank you," she said, looking at him gravely. She then began turning over the leaves, and he stood looking at her.

"I wanted to put your real name, 'Flower-Aspect,' but I thought better of it," he said.

"Why, it is an *English* prayer book!" exclaimed Claudia, who had suddenly come upon the prayer for the Queen and the Royal Family.

"Yes — it is," said Gerald, and blushed guiltily as he met her glance. "It is very much the same, is it not? You can use it, can't you? Besides, you may go to England some day. Americans are always crossing."

He added this last sentence on seeing the disturbed expression of her face, pushed into a glittering general-ity by it. And Claudia, who had been beguiled by her present into forgetfulness of herself and him, felt again constrained, though she struggled against the feeling.

"It is an ideal possession. And I like having it from you," she said, as she slipped it in her pocket and turned to leave him.

"Where are you going?" asked Gerald. "Don't go! I wish to talk to you. I want to say good-bye. I am going away."

"Going away?" repeated Claudia, turning a startled, anxious face toward him, and trying without success to keep her lips from trembling.

"I am going back to England," said Gerald.

"Going back to England?" repeated Claudia mechanically.

Her white lips got out "When?"

"To-morrow," said Gerald; and if he had wished to see what the effect of this announcement would be upon Claudia, it was there for him to see. The sensitive, quivering face blanched visibly as he spoke, and, though she would have given anything in the world for self-control, she could n't help it, the cup of that full, deep, pure heart so rudely shaken overflowed in tears. Going back to England; never to return, doubtless! It felt like death, except that only life can suffer so acutely. She felt his gaze riveted upon her. She put

up her hands to her face, and said in a low, pained voice: —

“Don’t look at me.”

The finest art of the most brilliant coquette could never have devised anything so appealing. True love, true sorrow, has an eloquence that Demosthenes might envy. Not look at her, indeed! He saw nothing else in all the world, except the slender, sobbing girl who was all the world to him. His heart smote him for blundering into a holy place instead of approaching it with reverent care; but it exulted, too. He took her hand down from her face and kissed it tenderly.

“My darling, my sweet one! I don’t want to go, but I must, I fear. And it depends on you, altogether, whether I ever return, for I never shall unless you love me; unless you will be my wife! You must have seen, you must know, that I love you with all my heart. I not only love, I honor and reverence you above all women. Look at me, Claudia!” pleaded Gerald. Claudia’s face was still turned away from him, though he still held her hand. “Dearest, do you love me?” he continued, again kissing her hand. The hand he held was like ice, and he could feel that she was trembling. He caught the other, and kissed that, too, turning her around so that he could see all the shy, sweet face, wet with tears and burning with blushes, the sweetest sight that had ever rejoiced his eyes.

“Do you love me Claudia?” he asked again with a great tenderness of entreaty in the question, and Claudia looked up at him. A brave, beautiful look it was, a very solemn one. So much spiritual beauty was in her expression, such loveliness of love in her face, such shining depths of truth and tenderness in her soft eyes, that Gerald, entranced, scarcely waited to hear her low “I do.”

He caught her to his heart and kissed her rapturously, and Claudia suddenly threw her arms around his neck and laid her face against his breast, as full of joy and sweet content and peace as he was, but crying out her joy peacefully after the manner of women. As for Gerald, he let her cry (which is a rare masculine grace), only stroking her hair tenderly and touching the dear little curl at the back of her neck, which wound itself like silk about his finger as its mistress had done about his heart.

"Come outside," he said at last. "We shall be more private there."

Fortunately for them both, Claudia agreed to this, and they just escaped the boys, who dashed in *en masse*, and ran upstairs with a tremendous clatter, having been off on a fishing expedition, and being eager to display their trout, change their clothes, and get a late supper.

Claudia and Gerald sat down in the farthest corner of the green bench running the whole length of the porch, unmissed by anybody and uninterrupted. And if Mr. Hyde's hearing had been as good as his sight, he would have caught this from his seat in the hall, where he was sitting reading the papers two hours later: —

"You *are* mine, then, my sweet Flower-Aspect? I can't take it in — I can scarcely believe it. It is such a beautiful thing, it dazzles at first, and I have been so cast down for such a long time; so tempted to tell you how much you were to me — everything! — so afflicted because I knew I ought not," said Gerald, putting his arm about her and taking her hand in his. "I had got to such a pitch of desperation that I was actually thinking of running away! It had become an unbearable situation, like bread hung always before the eyes of a starving man just out of reach. I was hun-

gering, starving, for your dear love, seeing in it all healing, all blessing, all joy, and delight, everything that I most longed to possess, but honor forbade me to stretch out my hand toward it. I have suffered in all this; at times it has been torment. Thank God, it is all over and gone, and that I have not lost you."

"I do thank Him," said Claudia. "I, too, have been very, very wretched. I could not understand. When this great light came into my life, everything seemed clear. I think I cared for you from the first; and I have never loved any other man."

"Darling! You are the sweetest woman in the world, and I the most blessed man in such a love. No man is worthy of you, Claudia; I, least of all, I have often felt. But since in your goodness you *do* love me, love me a great deal, and cover the defects and blemishes in my love for you, and all my sins and faults. Constant association with you ought to make me a good man, if anything can. Your sweet nature and the purity of your life have done much toward showing me them, and your affection will help me more and more to overcome them."

"I was just thinking that you would help me to conquer mine. You will make me all that you think me, teach me to be all that you fancy me, Gerald. And you are worthy of the best woman that ever lived! I'll not hear you say such things. I am a poor, faulty creature, dear, but I shall learn! Love is the greatest of all educations."

"I did not consciously take you into my heart, dear. Before I knew it, you were nestling in its inmost folds. I tried to cast you out; blind and foolish creature that I was! to put out the sun, the light of my eyes, to shut out the music of your voice, the sweetest voice that has ever reached me, full of hope, help, comfort for me! I always loved your voice,

Claudia, and find it as expressive as your eyes, far more so than the tongues of most people. Yes, I wanted to be blind, and deaf, and to sit in darkness, and tried to harden my heart, and cast out of my heart and life the most beautiful thing that God ever set there. But I could n't do it, dear. You are the very blood in my veins, the pulse of my heart, and its very core, as much a part of me as the hand that holds yours. I always had a curious sense of this. When I was with you, I was with myself and never so true to myself—only to sit down by you was peace and contentment. I have always loved to hear you talk; I always shall; but I do believe, if you were dumb, I should find you more companionable than any other woman: your eyes, your gestures, your movements, are a language in themselves, and your goodness, sweetness, and unselfishness find expression every hour of your life, it seems to me, in some loving, lovely way. As for me, I'm 'a poor thing—but *your own*,' remember that, always; yours for life, in death, and for that great Hereafter of which we know nothing."

"We know one thing about it, Gerald, and that is that it makes perfect the only thing that it cannot destroy. I feel immortal to-night, and if an angel stood here before me, and told me that I should not be with you and love you there, as well, and far, far better than I do now, or ever can on earth, I should not believe it. My own heart has taught me that God is love, and love, God. What I feel for you may change—I suppose it must in some way—but it will not fail, and it cannot die. It sounds a conceited thing to say, but I have no fear whatever that you will tire of me, or cease to love me. I think I was *born* your wife. I think, I hope I *suit* you."

"That you do, my darling! You please me, you satisfy me, you cheer me when I need cheering, and

comfort me when I need comforting, and advise me sweetly and wisely when I need advice, and inspire me *always*. You are all things to me in one woman, and if you were taken from me, what would be left would be something not worth having. But for my poverty, I should have long ago implored you to marry me. You must have seen, have known, how dear you were to me."

"Yes; I have known it—felt it rather. For a long time, it was quite enough for me just to love you. It filled the world with glory, and joy, and beauty, and I lacked nothing."

"My heart has often beaten furiously hearing you come up the stair."

"And mine been filled with delight by just hearing you whistling in your room over your guns."

"I have lain awake all night, sometimes, thinking tender thoughts of you."

"And I have had a million fancies, superstitions, feelings about you, that I shall never tell anybody—even you. I suppose most people would say I had been very foolish. Not so; I have been very wise; I only wish that I could have loved you a thousand times better—more tenderly, more truly; more unselfishly above all. I shall hope to do so in every day of our future life, Gerald."

"Dearest, I have not been worthy of your least kind thought, I fear, but I thank you for them all, for all your goodness to me since I came under this roof."

"My world was a very narrow one in many ways, before you came into my life."

"And you can have no idea how much I needed you, Claudia, how little faith in anybody or anything I had left; how little hope; how all the springs and sources of energy and action seemed dried up within me; how wearied my mind was, and parched my heart.

You swept in upon me like a clear mountain brook, and from the very first brought me a feeling of purity and peace. You have made all within me green and beautiful again; you have given me strength, and heartened me up, and made a man of me again! With you at my side, with your dear love, I can do anything! You will so run through all my life, I don't doubt; for there is no blessing for a man like a pure, good woman's love. It puts a soul in him, it keeps his heart tender and humble, it fills his mind with thoughts and ideals, that in a measure correct the impressions and influence of this sad and evil world of ours, in which we men must live — it is the breath of Heaven in our hearts, and creates, keeps alive all that is good in us. Men there may be in this world who are too cold-hearted or too profoundly selfish to need any woman's love. But I am not one of them. I need my mate, my wife, my other better self! I need *you*, my darling — I have needed you all along. Only to think of you has helped me more, and done me more good than all the other relations of my whole life. In your presence I could not have an evil thought. You lead me as Una did her lion, by a sunbeam. You are so *true*, Claudia. That is it. You are so *true*."

"I don't see how I could be anything else, as long as you are you, and I am I."

"I don't suppose you do, dearest. A sunbeam does not understand darkness. You are naturally true-hearted, and I feel that I can trust you implicitly — not only your affection and your faithfulness, but your prudence and discretion. I feel that I can give you my name, my honor, my fortune" — Gerald pulled himself up — "my future fortune, that is — and know that they are safer with you, dearer to you than with me, and to me."



"And I have watched *you* closely; I have seen you tried in a great many ways, and no woman can live under the same roof with a man for two years, and not find out of what stuff he is made. You are not of my country or people, but I trust you, Gerald, with all my heart. I have always trusted you. I never reasoned about it. I loved you, and where we love we always trust. But if you had not been trustworthy I should have found it out. I wish I could tell you how dear you are to me! But I can't express the inexpressible. I shall try to show you, in all I say, do, and think. I hope never to say a harsh or bitter word to you—I think affection dies of pinpricks as well as of stabs—never to grieve or disappoint or fail you; and with God's help I never will—*never*! From the moment I found I loved you until this moment, I have always belonged to you, in my secret heart. I have felt separated from my family in a sense, though I have loved them better than ever. It has been a great, a wonderful, a heart-searching experience altogether. My heart has often stood in awe before it. It has made me unspeakably wretched; it has given me the most exquisite pain and pleasure, tried me, tempted me, afflicted me, but I have always known that it was God's most precious gift to me. I seem already to have no self that is not you. For a long while I could not believe that you, who have been thrown with so many accomplished, brilliant women would care for me—I did not understand your alterations of manner, either, and accounted for them in a thousand different ways."

"Poverty, dearest. Always poverty."

"Do you know, Ada once suggested that you were privately married to somebody else, Gerald! Poverty in Virginia is so honorable and universal that it is regarded as an excellent basis of agreement—it never separates people who care for each other."

"Married? No, indeed. Thank heaven! I am *not* married to any other woman! It was only that I felt I must not ask you to marry me until I could give you a home, and maintain you in a certain way; and a pretty fright your cousin gave me with his millions, and my cousin, too, for that matter!"

"As if I could have ever married anybody but you, Gerald!"

"I was ready to go and hang myself almost the night of the ball. And I want to ask you very seriously, Claudia, whether you have fully weighed all that is involved in marrying me? The day I got that note from Hargreaves in prison, I got another letter which I did not open until I got to Washington. It called me home imperatively at once, and I could not put the ocean between us without telling you that I loved you, and finding out what hope there was for me. But have you thought, dearest, that a woman who marries a poor man has to make a great many sacrifices all her life long? She has to do without luxuries; she has to bear cruel anxieties sometimes about even the necessities of life; she has to see those she loves suffer, which is hardest of all, or would be for you, Claudia. And then there are the risks of ill health for herself and him, of his dying and leaving her to fight it out single-handed — the care, the worry, the long conflict with adversity that conquers the proudest spirit, and weakens if it does not defeat the bravest. You are the soul of unselfishness, and you are as cheerful as the sun; but are you sure you love me well enough to endure such a fate? Is it any wonder that I felt it would be wrong to ask you to do it — grossly selfish? I would coin my heart's blood for you; but suppose I was placed in such a position, through no fault of my own, that I could not for a time shield you from such evils? Suppose, do what

I would, I should remain a poor man to the end of the chapter?"

"Then I should all the more wish to be your wife, Gerald. If you are to have that long conflict with fate and fortune, I want to go into that battle with you, and we will help each other to labor, endure, and make sacrifices. I am not afraid. Trials of some kind come to everybody — there could be no trial to me like giving you up. Suffering of some sort we must all expect, and I only ask to suffer with you. If death should come — which God forbid! it would not separate us, dearest. You would need my love, my sympathy, more as a poor man than if you were prosperous. With yours, I can face *anything*."

On hearing this, Gerald drew her to him, and kissed her with reverent tenderness. He sighed — a sigh of deepest content.

"Now I am content! Now I am perfectly satisfied — perfectly happy! Tell me that *you* are, Flower-Aspect. Have I not well named you? The oak-blossoms for strength, the meadow-sweet for perfume? Every pang I have ever suffered in my whole life has been more than solaced, it has been blotted out by what you have just said! You have a great heart, a royal nature, Claudia, and your tenderness is only matched by your truth. How I am to leave you so soon I don't see. Oh! but I mean to be good to my little girl! I shall hide her away in my heart of hearts — nothing shall harm her. I never knew a woman could be so sweet! God bless you, darling mine! I am not what is called a religious man, but it makes me one to hear you. My heart is brimful of gratitude to God for giving you to me. I wish I had been a better man! You shall make me one."

"You must still go?"

"I ought to."

"I won't say another word. That settles it. When, Gerald?"

"I have engaged my passage for to-day week."

"So soon!"

"I might wait over a steamer," said Gerald doubtfully, his courage oozing away as he thought of it.

"No. If you ought to go — *go!* How long do you expect to be away?"

"Not a moment longer than is absolutely necessary, you may be sure."

"There is something painful in, or connected with it, is there not? I'll not have you tell me what it is. You are concealing something from me, Gerald, and I know it. But I know you'll tell me what it is when the right time comes. I am not hurt, not offended — we all have our reserved rights in such matters. Only I know there *is* something, and, if it is some new trouble, let me share it with you when you can; if it is some new discouragement, don't be depressed, dearest. We can wait. It will all come right with faith, and love, and patience, probably. If we *never* married — as it is not all of life to live, or of death to die, so it is not all of love, to marry. I shall love you with my latest breath, come what may."

After this they sat in the silence of great content. The cool darkness of the starlit night fell like balm upon their hearts, their agitation was calmed, their quivering sensibilities at rest. All the sweet, secret, timid scents that rise from the earth when the sun goes down, all the rich odors of the unseen garden beyond filled the air, and each expressed to them in its own tongue the same beautiful mystery of life and love completed, fulfilled.

At last the old clock in the hall, which had performed the same office for many generations of lovers, struck its deep, mellow note of warning.

"One o'clock! *Gerald!*"

"Impossible!" said Gerald, but, late as it was, took time to say several things more, and take another kiss from the sweetest lips in the world.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“O dass sie ewig grüne bleibe,  
Die schöne Zeit der jungen Liebe.”

*Schiller.*

WHEN Gerald ran downstairs next morning, he found the house flooded with sunshine, like his heart. But Claudia was not to be seen, and he was about to run up again and rap a lover's impatient reveille on her door, when, looking out of the back door, he caught sight of her on the terrace, surrounded by the boys, feeding the pigeons from a large tray full of “screenings” which she was scattering far and wide with a liberal hand. She flung her last handful as he looked, and gave the tray to Pontius, and the pretty white creatures were fluttering all about her as he walked down to join her; but before he got there they were all driven away, for the boys had insisted on a game of “windmill,” of which they were very fond. This consisted in Claudia's standing on her tip-toes, with her arms outstretched, and giving herself a whirl, which the boys kept up by striking her arms in such a way that the impetus, so given, was not lost until she cried off, or sank breathless on the ground. It was there Gerald found her when he got up to the party. He gave her a hand and helped her up, with a smiling “good-morning,” and got a bright blush and another “good-morning” in return.

“Cha — and Wyn have — almost — *finished* me,” she gasped. “My head is in such a whirl!”

"No wonder! Does n't it make your head ache?" said Gerald.

"She likes it. She has n't got any of that nonsense about her that most girls have; squealing and complaining and running and telling every time they get the least little pinch," remarked Edmund. "Girls are such geese! I never mean to have anything to do with them."

"Don't be too sure of that, Edmund," said Gerald, exchanging glances with Claudia. "Before long we shall have you groveling at the feet of some young lady of thirty or thereabouts, and about ten years from now I shall be dancing at your wedding."

"I'm not going to marry at all. It is all nonsense," insisted Edmund.

"I'm going to be a bachelore, too," said Charley. "Edmund says they're sensible men, and have lots of money to spend as they like, and I want to go in for bull-pups, and homers, and Shetland ponies, and cochinchinas, and athletics, and lots of things!"

"Ah! you'll think differently when you are grown, my boy! You'd better not make rash vows about being a 'bachelore,' as you call it. That dog of yours needs clipping, Wyn," said Gerald.

"Come see my pups, down in the stable! Come, Claudia! Come! Do!" urged Charley. "Slocumb promised me three of his black-and-tans — he had seven — but four died, and he said it was *my* four."

"Give me one, Charley, won't you?" said Keith.

"Go on, boys. We'll be down presently," said Gerald, laughing over this last remark. "There's a lot of human nature in Slocumb, is n't there? You have heard of the Spanish peasant's will, in which, speaking of his lost cow, he said, 'If she never returns, give her to the Church. If she comes back, let the children have her.'"

"The theology which gives a cow to children must be sound," said Claudia. "I hope she came back, for my part."

"May I not have a kiss, now that there is no one to see? Last night was not a dream but a blessed reality, surely, sweetheart?" said Gerald. "What! only one, when you have been scattering largesse among the pigeons with both hands?"

"Only one — but you know that is what we are to live on; bread-and-cheese and kisses," replied Claudia, brightly. "If we have only love enough to live on, Gerald, and I know we have — we shall not quarrel with our dinner of herbs, shall we? I could n't sleep, of course, and I amused myself by thinking of all my future economies! It is going to be so delightful to make small sacrifices and big ones, too, for you, that I can't think how you could wish to deprive me of the pleasure. I quite pity women, for my part, who have to be rich and can never know all the comforts of poverty. Think how free we shall be, how happy! No state, no ceremony, no grandeur! A little home, a modest table spread with modest cheer; our walks, our talks, our work, our books, our friends, each other; a rare holiday for which we shall plan and save; a nice bit of furniture, for which I shall scheme; an occasional luxury, for which you will intrigue; and a great deal done for others, I hope, to keep us from growing selfish; and what more would you, could you, add? What more could anybody want? I confess I don't see, Gerald."

"My dear girl! I like the picture. It is true that we should get all the best things in life. One can't eat with two spoons. We will see. How in the world did you guess that I was concealing something from you last night, Claudia? Do tell me."

"I did n't guess; I knew."



"You *knew*?"

"Yes, by instinct."

"I wish to speak to you about that very thing. I shall ask your permission to be silent about it for a time. I will then tell you all — and that from no want of confidence. It is not a whim either."

"We will fly side by side, Gerald; that is better than any yoke. Never feel that you *need* tell me anything."

"I am sure I shall tell you everything! It is a man's impulse, I think, to be perfectly frank with his wife. But when the wife suspects, doubts, distorts, pumps, or nags, truth retires to the bottom of the well, I am sorry to say, and *stays* there; I think many women interpret the marriage ceremony all their lives to mean that they shall take their husbands for better than they are, and then believe them to be worse. It is the very mischief, too, and has wrecked many a good fellow, and not a few good women."

"It is the last clause and not the first that makes the mischief, then," said Claudia. "I shall never doubt *you*, Gerald. To do so would be to degrade myself."

"I am glad you have faith in me, dearest; I am about to put it to a rather severe test at once. I mean to ask you to keep our engagement secret until my return from England — except, of course, from your father, to whom I shall speak this morning."

"So be it. I am not only content, I prefer it. Careless eyes and foolish tongues are a trial; they have to be encountered sooner or later, but I should like it to be as late as possible. Father, as the apple of my eye, I could not deceive, but I do feel that it would be nice to count my gold over in secret like a miser for awhile, before I tell even him all about it."

"You darling! What do you suppose he will say

to me — to a penniless pretender to the throne ? He told me himself that he hoped you would marry your cousin."

"He did wish it. But he never urged me to marry him. I am sure he will say that my happiness is for him the first consideration. He is very unworldly."

"When I have settled the matter that is taking me home, I shall present my credentials in due form. And I hope they will satisfy him that he can safely trust you to me."

"I have no doubt, Gerald, he will feel that you are your own best credential, though I can, of course, understand that you wish to do it. No one could know you and not know what you are."

"I *don't* see how I can leave you, Flower-Aspect ! I suppose you could n't marry me to-morrow morning, and go with me, could you ?"

"To-morrow morning ? *Gerald !* It would be impossible for fifty reasons !"

"Well — perhaps ; though I don't see why. Be sure, then, to have no delays when I return. I must go to your father. Good-bye for an hour !"

"Wait a moment, Gerald," said Claudia. "I want to say something to you."

Gerald waited, and, continuing to wait, finally said, "Well, dear ?"

"Shut your eyes, Gerald. I can't say it unless you do."

"Very well. I am as blind as Belisarius. What is it ? Tell me !" cried Gerald, complying laughingly with her request, and wondering what was coming.

He felt that Claudia laid a hand on his arm.

"I owe you a tiny grudge. How could you tell me as you did of your intention to go ? It was shooting me on the spot through the heart."

"Darling !"

"Just that. And I behaved so badly! You know in novels no girl ever does such a thing. At twenty minutes to twelve, supposing that she receives a proposal at noon, she is all haughtiness and cold disdain, no matter what happens or how much she cares for the man; at twenty minutes past she is all devotion. Are you sure, are you *perfectly* sure, Gerald, that you respect me just as much in your heart of hearts as if I had — had —"

"Perfectly, dearest! Never think of it again. I love you all the better for that glimpse of the truth," declared Gerald, opening his eyes and gazing at her with the greatest tenderness.

"Look as deep as you will — the deeper the better — you will always find it true. I feel troubled about it — but no! I am not ashamed! I cared so much for you that I am not sure I could have kept from you all knowledge of it even if that had not happened. Loving is like dying—we are too absorbed in the great reality to think of or care for the effect it is producing on people about us. Still, I thank you, Gerald. You have comforted me, dear, for I could not bear a shadow of a shade of that sort of blame to rest upon me in your thoughts. If you did not honor me with all your heart, it would break mine, though I am indifferent, perhaps too indifferent, as to what people think of me generally, except so far as the public opinion which is made up of the opinions of good men and women is concerned."

"Set your heart entirely at rest, Claudia. *I do*. You are the most honorable woman I have ever known, and the most worthy of honor. You are my own dearest Flower-Aspect! There!" said Gerald gravely, with perfect sincerity, putting a convincing period to his remarks. "Now I shall go to Mr. Hyde."

As he went, he twice turned to look back at Clau-

dia, still standing where he left her, looking after him, strange to say.

He found Mr. Hyde in his room, and so much does the uncommunicated communication reveal itself in us all when it is important, that Mr. Hyde's greeting to him was, "What is it?" so impressed was he by his air of purpose. Gerald took a chair by him and laid a hand on his knee. "I have come to ask you to give me your daughter Claudia, sir," he said, without preamble, but with a grave sweetness that told its own story to the old man beside him.

"*Claudia!* You wish to marry Claudia?" Mr. Hyde exclaimed.

"I do, sir. I don't know whether you have ever suspected my attachment to her. I have sometimes thought you did — that you must see it."

"No. It had not occurred to me to think of such a thing, except as a remote possibility. You have always seemed good friends, congenial in your tastes, and on pleasant terms always. But I had not thought of you as a suitor for my daughter's hand. Has Claudia authorized you to approach me in that capacity, may I ask?" said Mr. Hyde, looking like a royal parent whose kingdom went with the princess his daughter, his usual air of high-bred calm, and his natural personal dignity heightened by this most unexpected demand for the brightest jewel in his crown.

"She did, sir. She sent me to you."

"She has given you reason, then, to suppose yourself the object of her exclusive preference?"

"She says she loves me. And the belief makes me too happy for me to question it. You, who know her, know, too, that she is not a woman to say such a thing without meaning it. It is certain that I love her, and wish to make her my wife."

"You are quite sure of that? You are perfectly

confident that you entertain for her a sentiment that will justify you in doing so, and her in accepting you? Have you well considered the subject in all its aspects, and are you sure that you are not acting with precipitation, or rashness? — that you fully appreciate the gravity of the situation?"

"So far as my worldly prospects are concerned —" began Gerald.

"You mistake me, Mr. Mildmay," said Mr. Hyde quickly; "I was alluding to your feelings — the depth, the sincerity of your affection for my daughter, and the security afforded me by them. Claudia's happiness is with me the supreme consideration; and I have learned from experience that none of the gifts of fortune, none of the illusions of rank or fame are to be compared for one moment with the truly divine satisfactions of a marriage based on unselfish, faithful affection. I must, first of all, be assured that you have such an affection for Claudia."

"I have, sir. I love her most truly and tenderly. I would give my life for her. She is inexpressibly dear to me."

Mr. Hyde rose and began to walk up and down the room, and the ghost of his own long-buried past rose within him.

"Nothing except my poverty has chained my tongue all this while. But now I find myself suddenly called back to England, quite unexpectedly, and, though I fully intend to return as soon as possible, I could not put the ocean between us without telling Claudia that I loved her. I hope you are not displeased, sir?" Gerald continued; "I hope the idea of having me for a son is not altogether disagreeable to you?"

"So far as I am personally concerned, my dear Gerald, I may say that it is very much the reverse, for I am sincerely attached to you," replied Mr. Hyde;

and Gerald sprang up and not only wrung his hand, but threw an arm about his neck, and now walked with him about the room.

"Thank you, sir! thank you! I can truly say that I love you as if you were already my father. And if you only knew how much I love Claudia—!" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps I do, my boy. I, too, have been young, and loved Claudia's mother," said Mr. Hyde, the tears coming into his eyes, a tremble in his voice.

"I can well believe it, if she was at all like Claudia," said Gerald, much touched.

"She was to me the embodiment of the love of God—in her the love that I know He feels for me as for all His creatures found its most perfect earthly expression, and by her I was brought near to all that was pure and true and good, after a youth of hot-headed folly," said Mr. Hyde. "Now tell me your plans and views in all this; for I suppose you know that you are asking me for the immediate jewel of my home and heart."

"I know that I am asking for something very precious. I could not blame you, sir, if you accounted it a great act of presumption on my part, for many reasons. Who am I that I should think myself fit to make the happiness of a girl like Claudia—of any woman, for that matter? I assure you it humbles me when I think of it."

"Keep that feeling, and you will not fail in the attempt, my dear Gerald."

"I have told you all about myself. You know all that there is to tell about my people, my position at home," began Gerald.

"I have discovered for myself that you are a gentleman, and, other things being equal, I should, of course, greatly prefer that my daughter should marry a gentle-

man of pure race and known antecedents," said Mr. Hyde. "I am glad to say further that I have found in you *a man*, and when all is said and done it is *the man* who claims precedence of even the gentleman, for Adam is the father of us all! The connection is a suitable one, looked at from the merely worldly point of view. The Hydcs were also gentlemen in England; they have remained gentlemen in Virginia, and I hope will ever so remain in future, in the best sense of the term. I tell my Edmund that the best part of his heritage can never be lost while he is true to the traditions of an honorable ancestry, though he should live and die a poor man. *Mens sibi conscia recti* survives in any condition. Character has ever been the true Virginian's imperishable and most valued possession, heroism and patriotism, his most glorious and incorruptible riches."

The dear old man was trying to make smooth the way for "the poor fellow" who loved his daughter, as Gerald perceived.

"Then you would not feel that you were sacrificing your daughter in giving her to a poor man?" he asked.

"I should regret for both the sacrifices entailed by such an act if they ever amounted to serious deprivation, but I could not make it a ground for refusing my consent. Phædo was advised to take the middle course in steering his chariot, you know, and there is a greater degree of happiness, in my judgment, in the lot which is neither poverty nor riches than in any other. In your case you are young, you have excellent abilities, you would — I see no reason to doubt — succeed in gaining a modest independence; there is no stain on your honor. In short, if, as you say, Claudia has given you her heart, I shall not refuse my consent. I have no disposition to do so, indeed, for I esteem you highly."

On hearing this, Gerald became radiant.

"How kind of you, sir! I never can forget your generous confidence in me, your goodness to me."

"Prudential considerations may require a certain delay before your hopes are consummated. But do not feel discouraged. It is not in my power, in the altered state of my fortunes, to give Claudia a marriage portion; her own little property she has disposed of in a way that reflects honor upon her. I received not long since, though, a letter from my cousin, Horace Egerton, in which he speaks of some wild lands that I own in West Virginia, as that portion of the State is now called, though it goes very much against the grain for me to call it so. He thinks they are increasing in value, and may be worth something. Whatever it is, you and Claudia shall have it as a nest-egg, and the rest will come. I will also bestir myself in other directions for you."

"Thank you! Thank you! I fully appreciate your kindness. We will enter fully upon the question of our future arrangements when I get back, Mr. Hyde. Meanwhile, you have made me a very happy man."

Mr. Hyde laid a hand on Gerald's shoulder. "Be good to my girl, be tenderly good to her, Gerald," he said. "I am an old man. I shall not live to see many years of your married life. But be good to her, always—as the wife of your youth, your manhood, your old age, if God should prolong your lives so far. And I hope she may be to you what her mother was to me. I cannot make you a better wish, for there was never a better wife."

"I will, sir. You can trust me with her. And I hope you'll not only live to see, but to *share* our happiness for many a year yet. Thank you, again."

With this he was off, and presently brought Claudia back, who sat down on her father's lap and began to



cry by way of expressing her happiness. Gerald left the pair alone, and did not see them again till dinner, when Claudia was all remorseful tenderness to her father, as if she felt that she had done a dreadfully disloyal thing in consenting to marry anybody, and devoted herself to him almost exclusively.

The meal over, Gerald joyfully carried her off in a buggy for an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête* of several hours. They drove to old Chalfont Church first, and strayed all about it and sat down on the step outside, and talked for about an hour and thought it about ten minutes!

"When I can afford it, you shall restore and beautify this — the place where I first saw my Flower-Aspect! You shall put in all the windows and fonts and organs you choose. You'd like that, would n't you?" said Gerald, looking up at the tower musingly.

"It would be delightful, dear. I've often sighed over its dilapidated state."

"It shall have a silver roof and a gold tower, if you choose, like an Indian temple. And you shall have a lot of money for your poor people, Claudia — the women in limp print gowns and tunnel sunbonnets that I so often meet on the porches, asking for you. You'd like that, would n't you?"

"I should, indeed — there are whole families that I pine to help! You have no idea how much wretchedness there is within twenty miles of us this moment. I feel almost ashamed to be so happy when I think of it. I'd give every sad heart in the county some sweetness, some sunshine this very day, if I could, it would be such a crowning luxury of joy."

"So you shall if you wish to," said Gerald the calm, impulsively pulling a roll of bills out of his pocket.

"Here, spend this for them as you think best."

"*Gerald!* You must not! You can't afford it — bless the dear heart for wishing to, all the same," said Claudia, laying her cheek against his arm.

"Yes, I can. Take it."

"But you have a long and expensive journey before you."

"Still, I can spare some. Here is a twenty. Will that do any good?"

"Heaps of good! Are you sure you ought to give it?"

"Yes, dearest; quite sure. Is it the old servants? When we can, we'll make them all comfortable. You'd like *that*, would n't you?"

"Oh! *Gerald*, it would be so nice! Poor things! There are three of them in the county almshouse this minute, and there's old Betty nearly a hundred, I do think, and quite blind. She always says, 'ain't you brought me nothing,' when I go to see her. It is so like you to wish to help them, and I do thank you even if we can't do it for *years!*"

"And there's your family, dear girl. We will do anything you think best for them, when we are rich: educate the boys, make the 'Bower' a show place, carry your father off to England, pension auntie—you'd like *that*, would n't you, if it were possible? Build as many castles as you choose, and I'll see if I can't roof them in — some day! You see, Claudia, you have no self to speak of, and I am obliged to lavish my affections far and near, to hit the shining mark of my Claudia's heart. You are divided up all into bits, like a mediæval traitor, and I must try to get together as much of you as possible before the day of days comes."

"Dear *Gerald!* You are so generous, so good! I love you for wishing to do such things, just as much

as though you had it in your power to do them this very minute," exclaimed Claudia.

Gerald felt so ashamed on meeting the glance that accompanied these words that his English cat was half out of the bag before he could drive it back and draw the string.

"What is it?" asked Claudia, perceiving that there was something.

"Let us finish our drive," he disingenuously replied, as he rose to his feet, "the day is so lovely."

Drive they did accordingly for miles and miles, straight through their garden of Eden, which bore no resemblance whatever to Martin Chuzzlewit's, nor ever forgot that afternoon.

The sun had nearly dropped behind the mountains, and their horse was walking slowly down the home lane, when to their surprise Keith suddenly loomed up at their very backs and stuck his head under the hood of the buggy.

"Hello, chappie! Where did you come from?" exclaimed Gerald.

"We've been hunting muskrats, and we've got four, and Wyn is going to sell them for a lot of money and go shares. He has gone on up to the house."

"All right! Come along in," said Gerald, pulling him in through the window and putting him between them, and so they rode on into the grounds.

"Do you think he had been there *long*?" asked Claudia of Gerald, *sotto voce*, when she alighted, with a rather rueful air, at which Gerald threw back his head and laughed as he had not done since he was a lad. And that night Keith, sitting with dangling legs on a high chair in Mrs. Blunt's room, told her all about muskrattng in general and particular, and then, after a pause, added knowingly, "I know something."

"You do, do you? What do you know?" asked Mrs. Blunt

"Mr. Mildmay kissed Mysie twice in the buggy. I sor him," replied Keith, piqued by her tone.

"Nonsense, child! Nonsense," said Mrs. Blunt, but fell a wondering mightily.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"Las almas que se aman no tienen olvido,  
No tienen ausencia, no tienen adios."

*Manuel Flores.*

THE few days that followed were outwardly like hundreds of others that had preceded them. But Claudia and Gerald would have said that they stood out very distinctly from all the other days of their lives, and from each other. It seemed to Gerald that Claudia as he now knew her was so much sweeter than even he had thought possible, so altogether adorable in all her avowals, reserves, conduct, and character, that she grew dearer and lovelier to him in every moment of the time.

"I am not yet entirely used to belonging to you, in a way, Gerald," she would say. "I have had few intimate ties. I lived in myself as a young girl, in a world built, furnished by myself and filled with myself, like most girls. Then came my dear mother's death, and I was plunged into the gravest realities, and have never had time or opportunity since to form friendships, or dream dreams. My books gave me a certain outlook, but you have made a new world for me. Except for a brief glimpse of society in Baltimore, I have seen nothing; I have been nowhere, and I see now how I was dwindling into a larger form of selfishness only, when you came and changed everything — me most of all."

"It is I who came here a wretched creature, Claudia, my will paralyzed, my perceptions blunted, my sense

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of what is fine and high and noble atrophied. And it is you who have put a heart and soul into me," insisted Gerald.

"It is a divine power—that of loving. It is not you, it is not I; it is God in us both. I don't know how it is with you, dearest, but all this has put so much tenderness and pity in my heart for everybody—for the very animals and plants about me. It is so wonderful, so beautiful, Gerald; to love is to live; we all need it, we can all give it. I wonder why we are so chary in giving it, and calculate the less or more so carefully? I hope I shall never weigh or measure what I give you, Gerald. I shall never be able to love you half well enough, I know that. It seems to me that the world has always had light enough, and hope, joy, peace, and all blessedness in this one gift of God, and has wilfully starved in the midst of plenty. I hope now *truly* to love all with whom I am thrown, to whom I am given in any way or degree. You best of all, but not you only, dear. You see, I am so blessed—"

"Dear heart! And I? Think how blessed I am!"

"I must try to be a blessing to others, and so must you, dear. We will find a way. It will be a relief. I am afraid rather of so much happiness, though I ought to be ashamed to feel so. I am, too. It is only because I am a pint-cup, with the Atlantic washing in with its big waves! If I loved God as I love you, Gerald, I should have no fear of any sort, *none*, ever again; and no doubt this has been given me to teach me some part of the great mystery of that supreme love. A part of that part I have learned—I hope to be always learning the same lesson, how to love."

They had many such talks, many lighter ones; but, grave or gay, it was such a delight to look into the

pure depths of that sweet nature, that they always seemed to him too short. All other demands upon her time and attention seemed to him more or less unwarrantable and impertinent. "What does mammy want now? Can't the boys find their own clothes, pray? You are not *going*, are you? I say! I think I might be allowed to monopolize you altogether for the next few days," he would reproachfully urge; but all the same she attended to her usual duties.

"Dearest, do you know you scarcely looked at me at breakfast?" he would complain.

"That was because I was told to keep a secret, and you were doing your best to betray it! It is a notorious fact, though, that husbands cease to see their wives after a very brief period, and you can revenge yourself later. The beautiful Duchess of Devonshire said that her husband never looked at her after they had been married three months, in the sense of seeing her; and as I am no beauty, I suppose three weeks will consign me to the limbo of matrons."

"You think that?"

"No, since you look serious, Gerald."

"Yours will always be the face of faces to me, Claudia, and I can nearly always get a clear image of it, even when it is not before me, I have looked at it so long in my heart. Even in my dreams, I never have a blurred or grotesque impression of it."

"I hope that you will always find something in it that will please you, but that something must be affection, for I reserve to myself an undisputed right to grow old and ugly like my neighbors, dear. I shall always love to look at yours, I know. And in the same way I can believe that you will find mine attractive."

"That I shall, my darling. I find new beauties in it every day, it is so sensitive, mobile, intelligent. Why may n't I kiss you, pray? And why are you

taking away your hand, and adding grievance to grievance?"

In spite of his remonstrances, Claudia would put a new collar on Edmund's coat that evening, and he could only sit by and look on, and get a sweet look or word at intervals; at most, snatch her hand and hold it for a moment when she stopped to thread her needle.

"Dear me! It is *going*! and overcoats are *so* expensive!" she anxiously observed, and he could with great difficulty keep from saying: —

"Never mind! I'll give him a thousand overcoats if he needs them." With "The Towers" in his pocket and Claudia in his heart, he felt rich, indeed, and, as he sat there, gloated over every evidence of poverty around him; he beamed benevolence and delight upon the very holes in the carpet at his feet.

"*You* did that! You and the boys," remarked Claudia, observing him. "We ought in common honesty to put off our marriage for a year or two, and get father another. I foresee that I am to be a brake on the wheel of your expenditures all my life, Gerald, and I only hope you won't come to hate me for it! You are on the down grade now, and a very steep incline, too. Uncle Beverly has been telling tales."

"Oh! clothes cost nothing at home, that is all right," said Gerald, who had been glad to get rid of almost his entire wardrobe.

"Dear Gerald! Don't tell anybody that I said so. But you are *such* a dear Gerald! No! Gerald. You are not to take my hand again, or I'll never be done! But we'll go off presently together somewhere."

"For flintiness and utter heartlessness, Claudia —"

"Sh! there's auntie!"

It was not until he said suddenly that he "must pack" that his other Claudia got pale, and from that moment was very grave, and did not repulse him, was



so full of helpful suggestions to him, and showed herself so dear and loving, that with the labels on his box, and his keys in his hands, Gerald said that he had half a mind to stop where he was—who could tell what might happen? and again suggested that Claudia should go with him by the next steamer.

He was sitting on *the* sofa with her hand clasped close in his, in all the calm confidence of assured affection, when Pontius suddenly dashed up to him, exclaiming breathlessly:—

“Mr. Flanders done sent for you, sah! He done shot hisself!”

Now Gerald had been in to Wyvvern that very afternoon, and had seen Flanders at Hargreaves’s, overflowing with health, and in brilliant spirits.

“Shot himself?” he repeated. “Who says so?”

“Unc’ Dan’l out dah, sah. He brung word. He say he gwine die.”

“An exaggerated account most likely of some accident that has befallen Terence, but I must go to him,” he said, looking into Claudia’s alarmed face. He felt less sure of this when he had cross-examined the messenger, and almost immediately left the house, thinking, as one is so apt to do under such circumstances, of a thousand things relevant and irrelevant to the matter in hand; among other things of the night of his arrival in Wyvvern, of his being taken by the same man to the same house, and of all that had happened since.

This time Uncle Daniel had brought a buggy, and they were very soon at Butterworth’s, for Gerald was full of apprehension, and did not spare a fast horse. He saw the supreme moment had come for his friend, the moment he was admitted to his room, and caught sight of his face. It was the room in which he had been so ill, and now it was Flanders who was stretched out in his place; and when he saw him there, his mind

instantly reverted to all Flanders's kindness to him, and he was so moved by that, and by his ghastly appearance, that he had to turn toward the window for one second to recover himself before he could advance further.

Butterworth, white and scared, was sitting by the bed, and now rose.

"He was getting over a fence, and his gun went off accidentally. Wardour was with him, and got him home somehow. We got a doctor at once, but he could do nothing. No hope. Poor fellow! terrible thing — terrible!" he explained in a whisper, and after a moment left the room.

At the moment, and for half an hour afterwards, Flanders was in a comatose state, and Gerald took the vacant chair and watched him. He had pleased himself by thinking that now at last he was in a position to help Flanders, and had meant to deal generously and kindly with him, perhaps buy him a farm — and there he was lying, past all help, and needing only his six feet of earth. It was a sharp pang, and there were tears in Gerald's eyes when Flanders suddenly opened his, smiled, said faintly, "Oh! it's *you* — glad of that. Ye'll not be troubled — long with me. Done for."

Gerald tried to protest that he was n't, but the words died on his lips. He took Flanders's hand and said what he could.

"Nora. . . . Poor girl! . . . Give her my watch. It's all I've got," said the dying man.

"Terence," said Gerald, "you feel troubled about your sister, don't you, old man?"

Flanders nodded assent.

"She shall be provided for, I promise you. I have come into my uncle's property, and she shall never lack. I meant to help *you*," said Gerald, and could get no further.

A faint surprise came into Flanders's face, and then a

great look of relief. "Ah! that's good. Ye deserve it. That's good. That's good," he repeated. "Ye're a noble fellow—I'll go to sleep now," he said; and still holding Gerald's hand, he went off into his last sleep, and left the world poorer by one warm, generous heart and sunny temper, just as the sun rose cheerfully above the hills and flooded all the valley with light.

Gerald it was who took charge of him, and did all that remained to be done, as if he had been a brother; who examined his effects, and was not the less, but all the more a man that he wept over the shabby clothing, the old black pipe, the few bits of gaudy finery which, with his sister's picture, and a photograph of his old regiment drawn up on Brighton Downs, had constituted all the worldly wealth of his dead friend. He had an interview with Butterworth, who told him that he made no claim against Flanders, and declared that he owed him nothing, that they had "come out about even," as Butterworth put it, and got a written statement to that effect. He wrote to Nora—a letter that she cherished all her life, and that set the poor little governess's mind at rest forever on one point, and got a grateful letter in return, later, in which she said she had been "surprised to find how successful dear Terence had been out in America."

And so it came about that even the brief time which he had thought would be all happiness and unclouded joy ended sorrowfully enough in his following Flanders to his grave, with only such comfort as was given him by Claudia's tender sympathy with his distress.

And so it happened that a very sad parting took place between the lovers privately when the day came for him to leave. All the high hope and triumph and delight that had filled his heart was gone for the time being, and Claudia, with a sudden sense of "the chances and changes of this mortal life," clung to him

at the last as if she could scarcely let him go at all, after which he went downstairs and wrung Mr. Hyde's hand, and, with hurried farewells to the others, dashed off into Wyvvern, with nothing of the appearance of a man starting to take possession of a title and a fortune, the eyes of his mind being fixed, indeed, upon poor Flanders's dying face, upon a coffin (covered with wreaths made by Claudia), followed by a few carriages and one true friend beside himself, the dead man's dog ; upon Claudia's face and tender farewell.

Left to herself after all these excitements, Claudia felt more unstrung than she had ever been before in all her life. She was too loyal and trustful to let herself even wish to know anything about Gerald's affairs except what he wished to tell her, but her heart followed him every step of the way, and she had a thousand wistful fancies about him. What was this new trouble that had called him home ? Had she been selfish in letting him commit himself to what would probably prove a long engagement ? When should she hear him running upstairs again, and what did the New York paper mean by declaring that "the doctrine of averages" demanded that the Cunard Company should lose a ship before long ? She had a dismal week of it, before she could at all recover her usual cheerful balance.

"How was it, Claudia, that you were out of the way when Mr. Mildmay was saying 'good-bye' ? I suppose it is a chance whether we ever see him again, though he spoke of returning. When a man gets back to his own country and kindred after a long absence, he is in no haste to leave it," said Mrs. Blunt, by way of making her more comfortable.

"Why did Mr. Mildmay choose this time of year to return ? Are there not iceberg fleets, Addison, bearing down upon that line of travel at this season ?" said even Cousin Miles, who rarely contrived to be disagreeable, by way of tranquilizing her fears.

She more than once wished in every twenty-four hours that she had gone with him, and she found out, now, how many minutes go to make up the days that separate us from those we love, let calendars and clocks say what they will; and how true it is that every such separation is a kind of death. His letters to her were her only compensation for his absence, and she got three in rapid succession, and ran off to her room with them, and there reveled in them on the right side of a locked door — over the firm, beautiful handwriting, so clear, so characteristic; over her own name, written by that hand; over the seal, the signature, the contents, the very postage stamp! Never had there been such letters, to her thinking. And for all her reserve she behaved about them just as girls have always done. She carried them around in her pocket for one thing. She gave them many a kiss. She was never done reading them. She kept them strictly to herself, of course, and answered them at great length, yet never felt that she had more than touched upon a few of the ten thousand things that tried to squeeze through the door of her mind at once the moment she set pen to paper, and wrote on until she was ashamed to add another line, and then added a postscript often. From New York he wrote: —

“I have ordered for you a simple ring, which will reach you in a few days. It is a disappointment to me not to put it on that dear fourth finger myself. But I hope it will not be very long before I set another there that shall make me yours indeed, and you *mine*, my sweetest Flower-Aspect, forever.”

Accordingly, one day a little box came for her, and, opening it, she found — the most beautiful ring in the world, of course; — spelling “Gerald” in gems, and joy unspeakable. She put it on a ribbon around her neck until Gerald should return, though — she would

not set it on her own finger, having a sentiment that was half a superstition about doing that, and liking best to wear it above her heart, and in her heart, concealed from eyes profane. Anything sweeter than her eyes when her father asked if she had heard from Gerald and she said: "Yes, indirectly," it would be impossible to imagine.

To talk to her father about him freely was not possible — something always withheld her, kind as he was; she was so quiet, indeed, that he fancied her anxious, and said to her: —

"Don't be depressed, daughter Claudia, in thinking of your future. Time will run away faster than you can believe. This is a waiting world, but patience cures everything, and will bring the happy hour at last. Yes, a waiting world, my dear, but you and Gerald are willing to wait, are you not?"

"Quite willing, father. And I am perfectly content — that is, I shall be when he gets back safely," she replied.

She had worn her ring a week, when, by dint of looking long and lovingly at it, its hidden meaning suddenly dawned upon her.

"My dear, *dear*, DEAREST Gerald!" she cried, giving it three rapturous kisses, one to each adjective. "My darling! Oh, how I love you! How beautiful it is! It was a terrible extravagance! But I don't care! After we are married, I will make all my own dresses and trim 'all my own bonnets, and sleep with the storeroom key under my pillow, and never spend a cent without looking at it five times, at least, first; but if I were reduced to dry bread and water, I could not be sorry to have my precious, beautiful ring! And I'd starve outright before I'd part from it, though, if Gerald needed anything, it would just have to *go*. 'A poor thing,' indeed! I'm the richest and the happi-

est and the most blessed of women in the love of such a man. God bless him and bring him back to me only! I miss him dreadfully. The days seem just to bleed themselves away. But I am never away from him. I shall never be separated from Gerald, either in this world or any other."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"Therefore she is immortally my bride,  
Chance cannot change, nor time impair my love."

THE very first man that Gerald met on the steps of the "Carlton," was Lord Buddicombe, *alias* Mr. Smith. There was an aristocratic confusion of mind about that gentleman that kept him for a moment from recognizing Gerald instantly; he knew so many people, in so many places. He said, "Been out of town for some time, haven't you?" shaking hands, however, and then "*Oh, Mildmay!* I'll go back with you."

He did so accordingly, and they had a very pleasant talk in the club bow-window, about their voyage, "the States," and other things. At last it occurred to Gerald to ask about the "piratical craft they had met on the high seas."

"She is Lady Buddicombe!" said his companion, striking his knee as if vastly amused. "She did n't mind my being a Smith a bit; she said it was a good honest name, and the man who was ashamed of it was 'a perfect gump.' She did n't mind a Smith in cutlery. She said people had to have knives, and everybody knew that Sheffield cutlery was the best in the world, but that, if I minded, I had better take up *notions* wholesale with somebody, and go West and grow up with the country, and not whine around for ten years and wish myself somebody else. She said she did n't care if I was a foreigner — wherever I lived would be home for her, and that if I was poor, she had



plenty for both. What could I do? She did n't even mind my being slightly bald — I *am*, you see! — that she always *had* thought that a man ought not to look like a monkey. She fetched me, in short, and I'm precious glad of it, I can tell you, for we hit it off to perfection together."

"I thought your precautions were useless. Clearly there was nothing else to do," said Gerald, when they had joined in a hearty laugh.

"I remember you warned me against her. I remember you did n't think much of American women yourself."

"I — I can't recall saying anything of the sort," said Gerald, genuinely surprised. "You said they would not catch *you*, I remember."

"Oh, but you did, though. You pitched into them tremendously," insisted Lord Buddicombe.

"Well, I congratulate you. You were wiser than I was, then. If you have been foolish, I am certainly no wiser now, for I am about to follow your example," confessed Gerald, whereupon they both laughed more heartily than ever.

"We must know the lady when the deed is done," said Lord Buddicombe.

"You shall. I think your wife will like her," said Gerald modestly, not liking to flash his Kohinoor too brightly in his friend's eyes.

"When and where may I give myself the pleasure of calling on Lady Buddicombe?"

"She is not in town. But why can't you come down to us for a fortnight?"

Gerald explained that he could not do this, was congratulated on his succession, and then Lord Buddicombe reverted again to the subject of his wife, of whom he said, "I never knew such a woman. I've never been dull a moment since I married her. She

is so entertaining and so entertained. She enjoys cats' cradle as much as a *levée* at Buckingham Palace, and she's up to everything, and the greatest possible favorite with high and low, rich and poor. I suppose you know that that fellow Nokes, who married your old flame, lost all his money, and got mixed up in some scandalous City thing, and decamped to South America?"

"No; I have not heard of it. And she — Muriel — his wife?" Gerald asked, feeling that the mills of the gods had, indeed, been grinding.

"I believe she is stranded out there, somewhere. I can't remember where."

"Poor girl! Hard luck, that!" said Gerald, happy enough to forgive anybody anything, but finding food for much reflection in these facts.

When Gerald had made a visit to Hobson and Blow, and been respectfully recognized as the temporary owner of a title and estate that the firm felt belonged to those who had managed its interests for two hundred years, rather than to any Mildmay of them all, in a sense; when he had seen his tailor, and his friend Mellin, and sent off to Lord Barbury a fine collection of Indian curiosities that he had got for him, he went down to "The Towers." Birket-Fostershire was looking its loveliest, looking as only Birket-Fostershire can, in fact.

Dawkins welcomed him with unfeigned delight, and thought her nursling more her nursling than ever — as he was. He took supper with her at her cottage, and would not hear of her waiting behind his chair, but made her sit down with him in spite of all her protestations against such a proceeding.

He charmed her withered old heart by his gayety, his allusions to the nursery, his appetite for water-cresses, for her new-laid eggs, and anchovy paste, and her cottage loaf. He would n't be kept at a distance, but persistently tied himself back to her apron-string. He

told her of his engagement, and praised Claudia to his heart's content.

He gave her his gifts, and fondly opened a package containing a little shawl, which his dear girl had sent his nurse, "with much love" on it, in her clear, graceful handwriting — much love for him, he rightly read it.

He kissed Dawkins when she praised the gift, and the giver's picture, and left her the proudest and happiest of old women, laughing himself over the familiar spectacle of Nurse holding a towel before her face to conceal her stage "aside," in the way of a grimace (a sight as familiar as the sun), and saying, "Go along with you, sir." That brown stuff gown was of the stuff that wears, indeed; the dear old soul's soul had grown white with unselfish love and duties, like her cap and apron. Claudia and he would come together and have tea with "Dawks," his "Mammy," he decided. He wrote her that night all about his visit, and there was, after ten pages, a postscript, and this was it: —

"I love you, Flower-Aspect!

"*Ich liebe dich!*

"*Je t'aime!*

"*Te amo!*

"*Acushla!*

"I could go on for a chapter, but it will never be concluded, for it is and will be all the story, be it long or short."

There was melancholy, not triumph, in taking possession of "The Towers" — in seeing his uncle, the poor wife, the little child everywhere, at every turn — everywhere "*le roi est mort.*"

In a few weeks, though, the theme changed to "*vive le roi!*" of course, as was both inevitable and natural.

He began to give orders, to choose rooms for Claudia,

and prepare to heap honeyed delights upon the head he loved. He reveled in choosing her piano, her books, her maid, her lamp, her work-table, her pictures. He gave the London upholsterer the impression that he was "the most particular man he had ever known."

He arranged a room to look as nearly like Mr. Hyde's bedroom at the "Bower" as he could make it.

He got a pony-trap and a pair of bays for Claudia's use, and tried them to see how they answered his very exacting demands, and changed one of the horses, and altered the color of the lining of the trap twice.

He refurnished "The Towers" throughout, and had a terraced garden made and filled with old-fashioned flowers, as if by magic: so potent is money, the Aladdin's lamp of the nineteenth century. He gave the servants instructions without end, and saw with his own eyes his orders carried out as far as was possible at the time.

And all this time he was tasting an exquisite satisfaction in Claudia's letters, full of the tenderest love, full of the perfect sympathy that existed between them, full of the everythings and nothings of the home and life he had so long shared, full of plans and suggestions for a blessed marriage in which neither was to be "self-absorbed and selfish," and very full, indeed, of economies, her "beloved economies," as she called them, — the tiny house, the one servant, the model kitchen, in which she meant to prepare for him *bouillabaisse*, for which she had actually got Thackeray's recipe; the note-books in which she was writing down all the things that ought to be done for other people, — she "needed none to remind her of his wishes and wants, uttered or unexpressed."

She made him so in love with her imaginary *ménage*, with poverty and Claudia, that the advantages and splendors of his actual surroundings often seemed only

the gilding of his lily, his sweet Flower-Aspect, an overlaying, perhaps, of life with things wearisome and unnecessary. He had to look about him more than once to make sure that her refined nature would take pleasure in art and beauty ; his whole soul rejoiced in the vital joy given him by so much tenderness and goodness.

Meanwhile Claudia was suffering a distress from which he could not protect her in the thought of leaving her father, in many troubled thoughts about the very future about which she wrote with such bright certainty. What had taken Gerald to England ?

Night and day did Claudia think or dream of the absent one ; her love and prayers followed him as only a woman's can. And among the things in heaven and earth not dreamt of in our philosophy must be reckoned her seeing him as plainly as ever she had done in her life one afternoon before the light failed, standing in his room and holding out his hands eagerly to her. A turn, a step, and the vision was gone — if vision it was. The effect on any sensitive nature of the thing which cannot be accounted for is always very great, and Claudia began to feel very anxious. Was Gerald ill ? What had she agreed to do ? Would it not be wrong to let him marry in such haste ? Was it not rash for him to put himself into a position that might make him unhappy ? There was no thought of herself, but she had her misgivings. Then for six weeks she got no letters from him, and, though a volume of misery and mystification might easily have arisen between the separated lovers, it must instantly be explained that Pontius was at the bottom of the whole business ! He knew that Claudia sometimes got money in letters ; he tampered with her mail, hoping to get that money, as she discovered quite accidentally. Great was her astonishment, and great her relief, when she came upon a frag-

ment of writing — *the* handwriting — in his pocket; and though Pontius made confession, he could not make restitution. That very day a cable despatch came, asking why she did not get Gerald's letters, and stating that he would sail the week following; and she was so rejoiced that she forgave Pontius freely, though she never ceased to regret the lost letters more than scholars do the missing Milesian tales. That utterly irresponsible and scatter-brained person could never be brought to see the enormity of destroying a few sheets of paper, but by the time he had been flogged by Uncle Beverly, and abused by mammy, and lectured by Mr. Hyde, and reproached with tears by Claudia, he knew that he must affect contrition, whether he felt it or not, and that he was considered to have disgraced himself.

"I was jes gwine *borrow* dat money! I didn' mean no harm," he insisted, as if he had been a defaulting cashier; "makin' sech a big fuss, and talkin' 'bout sendin' me to jail! I didn' get but ten dollars, no-how, and I *did* give Miss Claujah dat letter, cause de *letter* warn't mine."

At last, one afternoon, when Claudia was down in the sleepy, sunshiny old orchard with the boys, who should come running down the hillside but Pontius, open-mouthed and breathless, ejaculating: —

"Mr. Mildmay's comin' up de lane; jes *gallopin'*!" whereupon all the boys started off in a run to meet him. But somebody was before them!

In a flash Claudia skirted the orchard, slipped through the hedge, and the next moment was in Gerald's arms.

It was ten minutes, at least, before the boys came upon them, and then they were walking on air down the lane together, radiant, arm in arm, trying to say ten thousand things in as many minutes and really saying

almost nothing, and that most disconnectedly, with so many pauses for such extraneous matters as exclamations (like "I'll never leave you again, darling!" and "Oh! how good it is to see you again!"), not to mention other irrelevant demonstrations, that it is a wonder that anything was said at all.

"Why, Claudia! How did you get here?" exclaimed Wyn, amazed.

"I *flew* here, to be sure. I keep a pair of wings for just such occasions," said Claudia, with a joyous laugh.

"Here, youngster! Take this!" said Gerald, tossing him his bridle-rein, and then, bold as a buccaneer, he took Claudia's hand in his before them all, and marched off *toward* the "Bower."

They did n't get there for an hour, but they made a most creditable effort to do so, under the circumstances.

"I can see that your business is all happily settled," said Claudia to Gerald, when the tumult of his arrival had somewhat subsided. "And I am so rejoiced."

"And so am I. You little know how rejoiced," said he, kissing the hand he held more than once.

"I hope it was not very vexatious. It is, it must be very hard, dear, for you to be poor. You have been used to so much luxury from your cradle, and you have such a generous heart! I sometimes fear, I wonder if it is selfish of me to marry you, Gerald? You would always be brave and true, but I can't bear to mar, perhaps, your life. It is different with me. I am so rich in you. I cannot be poor, and a woman has no career."

"What! Repenting already?" said Gerald, kissing her cheek this time.

"I love you well enough to give you up rather than spoil your life, if you call *that* repenting," said Claudia. "At least, I hope I do."

"Darling, I have a confession to make. But before I begin I wish to tell you again what you must know, that nothing could spoil my life except to lose you. If I had everything in this world except my Flower-Aspect, I should find all barren from Dan to Beersheba! With you I fully believe that I could be a contented and useful man in the most humble position in the world, and with the most modest means. But God has willed that I should be a rich man and not a poor one, for I have come into my uncle's title and estate. His yacht capsized in a squall in the Mediterranean, and he and his wife and his son all perished."

On hearing this, Claudia looked the horror that she felt. She covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out the awful sight.

"How dreadful! How fearful!" she exclaimed.

"I knew it before I left here, but I did not tell you for several reasons, the chief one being that I could not deny myself the satisfaction of being absolutely sure that you loved me for myself. Don't take your hand away. Don't look hurt. I beg your forgiveness, Claudia. You stood the test nobly, as you stand all such tests, and as I knew you would in my heart. I felt ashamed of having put you to it, when I saw how thoroughly unworldly and true-hearted you were. And I thought it best to go home and take possession, make all the preparations for our marriage, before telling you. Forgive me, dearest."

"I do. But I wish — oh! I *wish* it had not come to you in this way, Gerald," exclaimed Claudia impetuously.

"So do I, my dear girl. God knows that I wish it, too, and that if I could bring back my uncle, or the child, I would joyfully give it all back to them. I shall never cease to be grateful to you for one thing — that you induced me to write to him, that you made



peace between us before it was too late. It is one of the many, many debts that I owe you, Claudia. In his last letter, I remember he said that he had always loved me, and when I went down into the City to Hobson, I found that he had instructed them to arrange to give me ten thousand pounds at once, and charged the estate with another ten, to be paid at his death by his heir. It was his last act before leaving England," said Gerald, and his voice was broken. "Poor old fellow! Dear old fellow! I behaved very badly to him. I always loved him, too. It has made a great difference to me to know that he meant to provide for me so generously."

"I so hoped to know him—I loved him for your sake," said Claudia. "And now I never shall."

"I wish you could have done so. I wish I could have shown him my Claudia. Don't look so sad, dear heart! What cup is without its drop of bitterness? If I could have seen him once more, and taken his hand and embraced him, as I used to do when a child; if I could have asked his forgiveness, and his blessing on our marriage, and seen you two friends, I should have nothing left to wish for. As it is, I trust there is a great deal of happiness before us. Cheer up, dear one! Don't let *this* be a sad day."

"To tell the truth, I had set my heart on being a poor man's wife, Gerald. I had made all my plans, and loved them. I can't get used to all this strange, sad grandeur at once; and you must be patient with me till I do," said Claudia.

They sat for some time longer on the bench he had put up for her on the very brow of the cliff. The lovely landscape spread out before them was full of beauty, and hand in hand they looked out on the tranquil and beautiful future he painted for both.

"Gerald, dear, I hope that God, who has given us

so much, will make us very wise and faithful stewards. I confess I would have preferred for myself a simpler, a very different life, had I chosen it. To be perfectly frank with you, I think it will always be something of a trial to me to occupy that particular position. But we shall have it in our power to do so much for others — my feeling is a very selfish one, and I do rejoice for *you* ! It is your proper and rightful heritage, the place for which you are perfectly suited, and in which I feel sure you can do most good. Come, dear, let us go to father now," said Claudia, as they rose to return to the house.

Mr. Hyde welcomed Gerald most affectionately, but there was as little elation, as little personal satisfaction in his way of receiving the great news as there had been in Claudia's. His dark eyes opened very wide in calm surprise ; he heard quietly all that Gerald had to say, and then replied : —

"I congratulate you, my boy, upon your accession to the rank and fortune you were bred to expect. But great opportunities for all except the most ignoble natures mean great responsibilities. Shrouds have no pockets and life is a vapor. Goodness alone is immortal and imperishable. God bless you, my boy, and give you grace to accomplish the most difficult task He has ever set flesh and blood — to be good and grateful in the day of unclouded prosperity ; to be unselfish with every selfish desire gratified ; to succor the needy, having no need yourself and looking for no reward ; to be temperate with every temptation to every sort of excess. There is no nobler thing under the sun."

"I am not a Marcus Aurelius, sir, but I will do my best."

"I am glad to say that I have seen in you that which makes me willing to give the creature I love best to you, rich or poor."

"May I not hope, sir, that you will look upon me as a son, and will you not feel that you have a father's right to anything I may possess? If I can at any time do anything for you or yours —" began Gerald.

A faint color, all that remained of a great pride so severely and constantly humbled that it was almost extinguished, came into the old man's face.

"I thank you. An old man needs very little, Gerald, and that little I have," he said, with a pathetic, gentle dignity of his own.

"If you would only make your home with us —"

"I thank you," said Mr. Hyde again. "But like the Shunammite woman of old, I dwell among my own people."

"You won't come and see me in my own home!" cried Claudia, starting up and throwing her arms about him. "*Father!*"

"I did not say that. I shall come and see you both, my children, if my health permits," said the old man, taking his daughter on his lap, and would promise no more.

That day week Gerald and Claudia were privately married at "Old Chalfont," being already so joined that none could put them asunder, in the love that can alone make of any, man and wife.

No one was present but Mr. Hyde, who could scarcely fulfill his office and give away the heart of his old heart.

The boys, huddled together in a front pew, gaped and whispered, half frightened, half pleased. Uncle Beverly, in the front pew opposite, took matrimony under his protection, and made it all that was admirable and respectable. Mammy, behind him, with Mrs. Blunt, bore up as well as she could under what she considered "a po' folks' wedding," in an almost empty church. There was a little wedding breakfast

at which Willard Guest and his mother represented the shadow in every bright picture, and Wardour stood as the member for Butterworth's (Hargreaves had been liberated and sent to California by Gerald), profuse in his strain of homage to rank, in his apologies for not remembering always that a man is more than a baronet, and kindness and courtesy a coronet that all may wear who choose.

Mrs. Blunt looked like Marie Antoinette before her execution on the occasion. Cousin Miles proposed the health of the bride and groom in a perfectly audible voice. Little Keith, being asked for a toast, gave "Many happy returns of the day." Uncle Beverly stood at "I'se here" over the punch-bowl faithfully, so severely, indeed, that scarcely anybody got any, and Pontius lived sumptuously in private for a week off the things he filched from a distracted household.

A hurried, tearful embrace for Mr. Hyde, when all the other good-byes had been spoken, and Claudia was led away weeping to the carriage, her tender heart overwhelmed by the claims of love *versus* love, and duty *versus* duty.

"Well, I reckon it's all right," remarked mammy oracularly, by way of farewell. "But don't you talk to me, honey, 'bout no man *till you find 'em out*."

"You go 'long wid your husband, Miss Claudia. *I'se here* to take care of Mars' Addison," Uncle Beverly observed sententiously, as he shook hands with the bride.

As their carriage rolled swiftly down the lane, a turn brought the "Bower" into view again, and they beheld Mr. Hyde leaning against a pillar, shading his eyes with his paper, the better to follow their course, and just behind him Uncle Beverly's tall and saturnine form.

Gerald gave a last shout with a right good will. Claudia waved her handkerchief frantically, and, not

content with that, seized Gerald's, and leaned out of the window, determined that her father should see her.

A faint shout in reply reached them from Mr. Hyde. It was very faint, but Claudia's love-sharpened ears caught it, and it was "God bless you!"

"Come! cheer up, darling! We shall have him with us in a few months in our own home," said Gerald, putting an arm about his wife. "Our own home — does n't that sound sweet? And a beautiful one, too — but it is only a setting for my jewel. A heart like yours, Claudia, outshines everything else, and outweighs the world itself, as it outlasts it."

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